

**Spiritual Journey Mentoring Group**

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SF703: Spiritual Formation Capstone

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**Week 1:** February 13, 2023, 7:20 pm

My group consists of 4 women, meeting in person for roughly two hours each week. I first opened in prayer and reviewed expectations based on the Leader's Guide. I then asked everyone to write down what they hope to receive from the Lord in our group chat, and one member expressed hesitancy: "Oh, where everyone can see?" I responded it would be our first step into vulnerability. As we transitioned into talking about whether we are worthy of love, one member hinted at something she wanted but can't get, but never unveiled what it was. I struggled a bit with how far to push her to open up. I didn't want her to feel like I was prying if she wasn't ready, so I let it go. But as the night went on, I felt a nudging in my spirit to dig a little deeper, so I later asked her to elaborate a bit more, and she freely shared with the group as we all attentively listened. I'm learning to lean on the Spirit to know when to press in and when to move on. Overall, empathizing comes naturally to me, so I'd regularly nod, make eye contact, or say "Mhm" to affirm. Most members are uncomfortable with silence, but I felt led to spend 5-6 minutes simply listening to God at the end to hear what He had to say. In the end, two of us independently got the word "trust" from the Lord – which affirmed one member's need to yield and say yes to God in areas of doubt.

**Week 2:** February 23, 2023, 7:30 pm

I spent a few minutes reviewing expectations to ensure we're all on the same page. Since all members already know each other from church, they were generally willing to open up. One woman is a verbal processor, so meandered a bit when sharing about how fear of rejection affects her life; instead of interrupting, I learned to be patient and listen intently as she spoke. When she finished, I redirected her train of thought by asking what she senses God saying to her about feeling rejected or judged for who she is. Since my role as a leader is not to fix anyone, I feel a lot less pressure to know all the "answers," which frees up space for God to minister directly to each woman. While asking questions comes easily to me, I'm still

learning to ask the *right* questions to draw out hidden areas that need to come into the light. By cultivating my own alone time with the Lord and abiding in the Spirit, I hope to develop my wisdom and discernment in this area. On a separate note, I noticed two members occasionally checking their phones, so I plan to reiterate the importance of being fully present by keeping phones away for future sessions.

**Week 3:** March 2, 2023, 7:30 pm

I started with a reminder to be attentive and to avoid checking our phones during the session. After opening in prayer, everyone shared about what the Lord had been revealing to them during their time of silence, solitude, and stillness this past week. For those who shared that they struggled, I asked, “What is the Holy Spirit saying that you need to step into this week so that you can listen to God better?” One mentioned cutting back on social media, while another shared about taking a sabbath and turning on her “Do Not Disturb” for the day.

We then transitioned to the Mirror Moment, and one woman started to cry when talking about her strained relationship with her mother and feeling unloved for most of her life. She was quick to say sorry, but I reminded her that it’s okay to cry and to lean into emotions that arise because they’re often indicative of deep wounds. As someone who is used to comforting criers with a rub on the back, I’m thankful for the tip in the Leader’s Guide to not touch the crier, lest they shut down, but to simply listen, lean in, and wait. Another woman got emotional and started crying when sharing that only God and her cat are in her circle of intimate belonging relationships. Her cries turned to wails, and at one point, she’d speak in Thai, her heart language, but I was fine with that because I didn’t need to understand; I knew the Holy Spirit was bringing hidden wounds to the surface. It was a cathartic experience for her. We didn’t resolve everything, but last night was the start of bringing her past hurts to the light and unpacking them in God’s presence.

Not everyone got to share, but we all understood that those pouring out their hearts needed extra time and emotional/spiritual support. I was especially encouraged when one member shared that this mentoring group was the high of her week, and another shared that she feels safe to share her truest thoughts and feelings in this space without judgment or fear. We ended in prayer and hugged the two women who had been crying.

**Week 4:** March 9, 2023, 7:30 pm

Considering the emotional session last week, I checked in with the two women and asked if there was anything God revealed to them ever since He brought to light some unresolved wounds. Their issues still needed further processing, but both were in a healthier place in terms of seeking the Lord and finding a healthy rhythm of silence and rest as needed. Before transitioning to the Mirror Moment, one woman seemed preoccupied with her thoughts, so I detoured to discuss what was on her mind. Although it was work-related and off-topic, I wanted to address her worry so that everyone could get back on track.

Last night's discussion about brokenness was particularly emotional. After some silence, one woman shared she went through a tough break-up and subsequently got involved with the wrong crowd to cope with her loneliness. I asked her what she sensed the Lord saying to her and she tearfully responded she felt the depth of God's redemptive love in ways she had never felt before. Despite her openness, I still sensed hesitancy and shyness from other members. Even though I'm the facilitator and not a participant, I felt led by the Spirit to openly share my brokenness. My heart started racing as I prepared to share, but after I voiced my past sexual struggles, I sensed the power of my secret dissipating. Two other women promptly raised their hands and said they'd struggled with it too. One reached out her hand and confided that God revealed to her this same area of brokenness, but she had planned to stay silent. Praise God that by cultivating an environment of vulnerability, she too was encouraged to bring her shame to the light. It was daunting to share my life experience and

feel naked and exposed, but God used it to shed light into the dark and dusty corners of our souls. I later reinforced the importance of accountability and inviting God into the process of healing, instead of simply venting.

**Week 5:** March 16, 2023, 7:30 pm

This week, we focused on the topic of sexuality (to which all the ladies were looking forward!) and adopted an open-forum style of discussion. Everyone first spent 5-10 minutes writing down their position on biblical sexuality based on Scripture to see where we all stood. The big question of the night was how do we speak the truth in love when caring for the LGBT+ community? At one point, two women shared their current struggles with responding to wedding invitations from gay couples. Just last year, I wrestled with the same predicament; eventually choosing not to attend my childhood friend's wedding. Our relationship has since become strained, but he knows I still love and care for him. As painful as it was to recall, my hope was to encourage my sisters to lovingly stand firm in God's view of holy sexuality. Overall, surprisingly, there were no issues with shyness or awkward silence throughout the night. Because sex is rarely spoken about in Thai culture and is seen as a private and shameful matter, all members of the group actively engaged and appreciated having the space to safely unpack their thoughts about sexuality.

**Week 6:** March 23, 2023, 7:30 pm

This week, after an opening prayer, we started by reading through Psalms 32 and 62 and answering, "Are there things in your life that need to be spoken because your silence is slowly killing you inside?" At first, one woman shared a light-hearted response but then shared that she has a heaviness in her soul. I pressed her a bit further and asked her to be mindful of what she's feeling because sometimes they're indicators of what the Spirit is trying to bring to the light. Without much resistance, she willingly opened up about a recent heart-breaking family revelation that has left her in shambles. She discovered the secret two

weeks ago but never took the time to fully process and grieve the news. She was tearful. When another member jumped in and asked a clarifying question about the situation, I immediately saw her dialing back on her emotions and trying to maintain composure, so I stepped in and affirmed that we should just let her share whatever is on her heart and mind.

As she poured out her heart and cried, there were moments of long silence; I was tempted to speak, but I leaned into the discomfort and waited. I eventually voiced that there were many things we were itching to say, but what was God saying to her? She eventually identified specific lies she believes, and the truths that God was telling her. I was cautious about initiating any touch because I didn't want to shut down her emotion, but after a while, I asked if we could hug her and she said she'd love that because physical touch is her love language. When we all embraced her, she let out her emotions even more freely, and other members were also moved to tears. Although we didn't have time for others to share their Mirror Moment, I sensed the Spirit wanted to minister specifically to this woman last night.

**Week 7:** March 30, 2023, 8:20 pm

This week we dove into each person's loudest inner noise (i.e. busyness, social media distractions, etc.). To help them become more in tune with the Spirit's voice and leading, I'd often ask, "Is there anything God is saying to you about how to find freedom from the noise?" or "What are practical steps you can take this coming week to hear from God better?" One woman shared that (when she was a new believer a while back) she received a spontaneous utterance from someone that truly struck her like an arrow. Turns out, that someone was another member of the group! They were strangers at the time, but the Lord very specifically spoke to her through that encounter and squashed any doubts about His existence. Later on, another woman shared she recently received the gift of tongues; she was hesitant to tell the group at first because of controversy across denominations, but she felt safe and we were able to celebrate this filling of the Holy Spirit with her. Throughout the

night, two women would get distracted and have side conversations, so I had to gently remind everyone to refocus and listen attentively to the person speaking.

**Week 8:** April 4, 2023, 8:00 pm

All of us couldn't believe how quickly the last eight weeks flew by! We first reviewed each person's statements from Week One about what they hoped to receive from the Lord. We recalled how uncomfortable it was for one of the ladies in the group to even share her statement with the group that first week, as she is a private person; however, in her own words, she said, "Now you all know me. I have nothing to hide." From that first step of vulnerability to where we are now, we've come a long way. The Lord has brought forth many breakthroughs, gently nudging each person to bring hidden wounds into the light and to start the journey toward healing and freedom.

Even last night, the Spirit ministered to one woman as she poured out her heart about a secret she had been harboring for seven years – one she was willing to take to the grave. This member has been faithfully coming to each session but often prefers to stay quiet unless I call on her specifically. Out of all the questions at the end of the chapter, I was drawn to ask the one about *surrender*. After a long moment of silence, she spoke up. She was fidgeting and I could hear her debating under her breath – "I don't know. Should I?" She shared she had already made up her mind from Week One that she wouldn't share this secret with the group, but that day she strongly sensed the Spirit prompting her to unload this heavy burden. As she tearfully opened up, we quietly engaged and listened. In the end, we prayed for her and expressed how we were encouraged by her testimony of obedience and surrender to the Father, even when she didn't want to.

As a mentor, it's been challenging to withhold my thoughts when trying to respond to someone's pain, but it's been even more rewarding to see God directly ministering to their souls. I'm learning to hone my skill in asking questions that will lead people to Spirit-led

revelations instead of simply giving answers or telling them what *I* think they need to hear. Moreover, as a planner, I'm used to sticking with a pre-planned outline, but I'm learning to let the Spirit lead and be okay with not finishing all the questions I had in mind. The goal isn't to check things off my list, but for the group to feel and step into the Father's love. As for my mentees, I've witnessed growth in all participants in terms of increased transparency and willingness to say yes to God even when it's uncomfortable. One mentee, who previously said she only has God and a cat in her inner circle, recently let a trusted friend in – she's learning to let down her guard and invite people into her brokenness instead of silently dealing with it. Another mentee expressed she doesn't always hear from God, but she's showing up anyway just to listen, and she's exploring ways to best hear from Him.

This mentorship group has been one of the highlights of my semester. Everyone in the group expressed that having this safe space to share and hear from God was much needed and missing in our community. We agreed we'd love to continue meeting as a group and are brainstorming other books to read, perhaps on singleness. Leading this group has not only affirmed my spiritual giftings in encouragement/exhortation and mercy but also sparked a desire to keep this ministry going even after this semester is over. I was initially nervous about this assignment, but it's become a huge blessing – thank you!