

Spiritual Journey Mentoring Group

Leader's Reflection

Athaley Albania

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Introduction

To fulfill the assignment for class, and to better become equipped for future ministry, I led a small group of four singles, mixed gender, through an eight-week commitment guided by the book *Spiritual Journey*. Finding a group who was willing to commit to eight weeks was initially difficult with scheduling difficulties and people's prior commitments. Another issue I encountered when forming the group was some strain on relationships between potential participants. I was careful of who to ask to join because I was aware of my own limitations as a leader, but if I were to do this assignment again, I see how it would be an opportunity of growth for me to have people in the group that have different personalities and theological backgrounds. Meetings were conducted weekly, over google meet, and the wrap up session was held in person with 3 of the 4 participants present.

Week 1 – Introduction and Purpose (February 7)

I used the first week as an introduction into the purpose of the group, setting expectations of the commitment level I require of them, and discussing their expectations of what they are hoping to achieve from being part of this mentoring group. Today's meeting felt a bit awkward and two of the participants were late. Everyone was attentive as I shared the reason for the group and went over the 6 principles a few times of show up, engage, listen, open up, receive, and step up. They were forgiving towards me for moving the first meeting date. I was encouraged to hear why each person joined the group and what they were hoping to receive or grow in, and I also felt encouraged by one of the participants' interactions. I have only interacted with him a couple times before this first meeting but his feedback and participation throughout the meeting helped me feel more comfortable, and helped the other members be more engaged for the first meeting. Because I had asked for an 8-week commitment and 3 of the 4 of the participants had already

finished chapter 1 before today's meeting, we decided to do 2 chapters for next weeks' meeting to stay on the eight-week schedule. I think that I need to be more prepared in the coming weeks, but I also know that this was the meeting that I was talking the most. In the following weeks it will be mostly participant interaction and sharing of their stories and what God showed them in their mirror moments.

Week 2 – Chapter 1 and 2 (February 11)

I felt more confident and prepared today as I led the group, I didn't feel awkward but leaned into the moments of silence. After people share their mirror moments, I need to listen to the Holy Spirit more or press in more because it felt a bit too methodical today with people sharing and answering the question, and then moving onto the next part of the leaders' guide. An issue I encountered was that Male 1 sometimes got side tracked during his time of sharing and I still feel that he uses a lot of "churchy" language in his responses. He's being as honest as he can be, but I can tell that sometimes in his honesty like about his unforgiveness toward his ex-girlfriend, it is a matter that he did not want to process with us in that moment. I need to pray more intentionally for his heart to be moved to forgiveness and to not feel jaded as he shared that as well. I was encouraged about how Female 1 had been hearing from God in the previous weeks already and she had begun her healing process. I didn't pry too much about specifics of how people had wronged her, but I think next week I'll follow up on how she's feeling about it. She said that the Lord has helped her to truly forgive and that she felt peace about the situation even though it had happened years ago, she didn't know she was holding a grudge for that long. Male 2 seems mostly content in his relationship with God currently but is seeking to keep following God. It has greatly impacted his relationship with his dad, positively, and he knows that there is a strong connection between his relationship with God and his relationship with his dad. I wonder

if this is because his dad is a missionary and so understanding God deeper helps him understand why his dad has committed his life for the gospel, but in the process “abandoned” his children. Female 2 reflected on the mirror moment and created a mask of the ways she has put up her boundaries, but even as she saw herself, it was somewhat in a negative light with the main qualities being anxious, overthinker and “this is fine” referring to the burning dog meme where things are very clearly not fine.



Week 3 – Chapter 3 (February 20)

Male 1 shares his thoughts candidly, but I was pushing him to think of real-life situations that he’s experienced instead of making up examples of when he *might* feel a certain emotion. Female 2 is very succinct with her responses and I’m not sure how to draw more out of her in the moment. She is open to answering the questions I ask, but I feel like I am not guiding her to think deeper about underlying reasons of her emotions. Male 2 is the opposite, he gives a lot of background and details about situations and can veer away from answering the original question, but he seems to be the one who is thinking about past experiences and their effects on his life now. He must be a verbal processor. I’m sad that Female 1 was not able to make it today,

especially as we talk about community. I feel the farthest from her relationally and I hope that she could continue to open-up to us and make it to future sessions.

Week 4 – Chapter 4 (February 28)

Today's meeting, I felt more connected, possibly because it was just the 3 of us women. I felt that there was less of a time restriction and the sharing time felt a bit more natural. We were able to share very equally today and that there was more connectedness in our time spent with Jesus over the week. We also had spent time at a worship night together on Friday, then again on Sunday after service just hanging out and celebrating my birthday, so to see one another again today it was like we had a nice streak going. Female 1 and Female 2 are both very open when asked about details and so I am learning the importance of asking the right questions. I could see how the Lord is working in Female 2's life and how the forgiveness exercise showed her hurts from 10 years ago that she had gotten over but had only brushed aside. For Female 1 she was open about how in the past her mom has helped her in her spiritual journey by being the person that she shared the things she felt shame about, but even so, she had to forgive her mom for not meeting other needs like being her parent in a time that she also needed the comfort of her mother. These were things that God was showing me in my life this past week and so I felt that we were all able to relate to one another naturally today.

Week 5 – Chapter 5 (March 6)

I felt awkward today while leading, possibly because I was writing my blind spot/leadership paper and so I was aware of things that I am not usually aware of in how I lead and interact with others. I can feel that the Lord is drawing the group closer to Him and that they are aware of His desire for intimacy, but I need to start praying more intentionally for this group

and more specifically for each person. I know that they each have had their own breakthroughs with Jesus in the past, but I hope that there will be an opening for God to show them that they don't need to be in a desperate time in their lives to meet with Him. Male 2 was having technical difficulties with his audio today and so it was difficult to hear him throughout tonight's session. Male 1 was working late but showed up so at least everyone made it today. His answers today were more directed, and he didn't talk in circles like the previous nights. I feel that I'm starting to understand him more when he says that he has a heart for serving, and that I can see why he feels connected to God through others. He expressed it reveals to him that He needs Jesus more.

Week 6 – Chapter 6 and 7 (March 20)

Only Male 2 and Female 2 were present for this meeting. We decided to do two chapters on this week because we had to skip the previous week due to my cultural immersion experience for another class. I felt to share with the group about how listening prayer has helped me in my walk with the Lord and in intimacy, and as I was sharing, I choked up a bit to remember the faithfulness and consistency of God's love. I think that moment was necessary for the participants to see how I am still learning too and walking with them, not just teaching principles. Since it was just the three of us today, I ended the session with having them practice hearing God's voice and listening for a prophetic/encouraging word from God, for each other. I felt led to do this today to give each of them a chance to remember what it's like and to better know when He is speaking in their lives. Both were able to see images for each other and Male 2 also prayed for a word for me.

Week 7 – Chapter 8 (March 27)

All participants were present for today. Female 1 was feeling under the weather, so she asked me for permission to keep her camera turned off during our session. Because I would rather have her present with no camera rather than absent completely, I told her that whatever makes her the most comfortable and encouraged her that we do miss her company and input in the way that God is working in her life. Male 2 voiced that the end chapters of the book felt like they were more applicable to his daily life and that it felt like he was finally learning something new rather than feeling like he was getting a refresher on spiritual disciplines or hearing God's voice. I was having trouble keeping the group engaged on this day, and Male 1 was eager to get finished because he wanted to go to the gym. I was discouraged by this response, and I felt that his attitude of "just wanting to finish" was contagious and the other participants also began to zone out during the session. I thanked everyone for their commitment to participating and reading through the book together, but I felt disappointed that I couldn't hold their focus together for the final chapter.

Week 8 – Wrap up and Celebration (April 3)

Female 1 was missing from the in-person wrap-up and celebration at Male 1's home. I wanted to gather in person for our last meeting of the 8 weeks to celebrate together how we finished the book and hopefully developed new habits in becoming closer with God. I was discouraged to know that female 1 was unable to attend, but we had a short text conversation where she showed me how thoughtful and observant, she is even though we have had limited interaction in real life. We talked about our love languages with one another and how she felt blessed to have walked with the group through the last 8 weeks. During our wrap-up session, I felt obligated to share my personal shortcomings as a leader with the participants, as I had made

some questionable decisions the previous week in my personal life. Because I value honesty and transparency, I shared with the group, and they were forgiving and understanding. It was fun to spend time together in person, but I can see how easy it is to get off track from the subject when a group is meeting in person compared to being in a zoom call online. Male 2 had an appointment after the meet-up, and so being mindful of that helped us talk about the goals that were set at the beginning of the meetings and what has grown or changed. Most participants said that they did feel closer to God and that they have a better understanding of how He speaks to them, but only Male 2 voiced that he has integrated new spiritual habits into the rhythm of his life. I am grateful for all the participants but I think that because I feel that my friendship with Male 1 and Female 2 is closer than Male 2 and Female 1, there is more growth that will come as we walk together even after this assignment.