

Spiritual Journey Mentoring Group

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## Introduction

One of the course assignments for this semester required me to be a mentor for a small group. I was tasked with facilitating our meetings for eight weeks to discuss their soul care issues. I had the option of mentoring a same gender or a mixed group. We all utilized Dr. Wanda Walborn's book, *Spiritual Journey: Can I Really Get Close to God?* for the weekly discussions, and I purchased the Leader's Guide to help me to navigate and facilitate the nightly discussions. This would be in alignment to what was stated in Anderson and Reese's book, *Spiritual Mentoring* that "Spiritual mentoring helps us discover what God desires for us and is already presently creating in the life of the mentoree through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why we say the role of the mentor is to facilitate the discovery process" (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p. 46) .

I prayed about who would be the members of my small group. I felt prompted to conduct a small group of 5 men. They were all Black men but there were noted differences between them. DS is an older working man who is a husband and father of two young adult children. FB is a younger working man who is a husband and father of a 2-year-old daughter. JH is a single young man with multiple college degrees who recently accepted the Lord into his life. DG is single and is also a recent college graduate who works in the health industry. TB is pursuing his college degree and currently working part-time. They all still attend their respective churches regularly and state that they have a personal relationship with God.

I also prayed for tools and insight to be effective in my role as a mentor. In response to my prayer and as part of our class discussion on 1/25/2023, Dr. Wanda Walborn shared about the following different stages of the process: pre-awareness, self-awareness, turning point, identity obstacles and moving forward. As part of that same night's discussion, I was also equipped as a

mentor with the following seven essential elements in spiritual mentoring: 1) relational – being incarnate 2) grounded in the ordinary, 3) partnership with the Holy Spirit, 4) a spiritual mentoring that is intentional 5) spiritual mentoring requires listening, 6) one size does not fit all and 7) knowing and caring enough to not interfere.

Psalm 133:1 says, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” I can safely say that a spirit of unity and willingness to work together was present and evident from our first discussion session on February 02, 2023 at 8:00PM and continued on until the eight session was conducted on March 23, 2023 at 7:00 PM. There were no big “I’s” and little “you’s” present in any of the discussions, texts, emails or even telephone phone calls which transpired. Each person was willing to share, assist and ensure cohesiveness as we progressed from one week to the next. The content of this paper is to highlight the following: issues which were identified, insights into my own growth as a mentor, and achieved growth of my mentees. This would be best demonstrated by referencing and incorporating what I learned from course readings, class presentations and discussions on mentoring, and the role of mentor and mentee. All the meeting sessions were conducted via Zoom.

### **1st Session – February 02, 2023 between 7:00 PM – 8:15 PM**

The first night provided an opportunity for introductions to be done. After we watched The Welcome and Principles video, I was able to utilize the following 6 key principles of show up, engage, listen, open up, receive and step up, as starting points for group discussion engagement. When each group member was asked as to which one principle they have typically demonstrated in previous group sessions, they varied in their responses. After they shared their individual choices, I encouraged and challenged them to not to gravitate to just one principle but strive to do all six in each group session. A few shared that some of the principles were easier

said than done. However, the overall sentiment of the group members was that they were desiring for God to do things in their lives as a result of this group experience. As they individually shared what were some of those things they wanted God to do over the next 8 weeks, I clearly realized that I would need the partnering of the Holy Spirit and for Him to address these different requests.

### **2nd Session – Chapter 1 - February 10, 2023 between 7:00 PM and 8:15 PM**

The mirror moment for this night from Chapter 1 was with regards to their attachment to God and acceptance of love from God and others. I was surprised how easily some shared about their struggles at times with accepting God's love even as it relates to things in their past. For example, JH shared about hearing the unconditional love of God before he got saved and being desperate to receive that love especially when it came to addressing circumstances which caused him shame. DS shared that he had to personalize John 3:16 to better understand God's love for him. When he understood that, it encouraged him to grow in his intimacy with God. FB shared that he came to realize as he read chapter 1 of the book and prepared for this week's discussion, that he must be intentional about being vulnerable and transparent before God so as to help in his increased intimacy with God to occur.

### **3rd Session – Chapter 2 - February 16, 2023 between 7:00 PM and 8:30 PM**

This week's mirror moment for chapter 2 was with regards to "my mask." The focus of this night also addressed the fear of rejection. As was shared in the book *Spiritual Mentoring*, there are different tasks to be fulfilled by the mentor and there are tasks to be fulfilled by the mentees. Three of my tasks as a mentor were "to create a space welcoming the mentoree to be

safe and open, to create a space with boundaries of confidentiality, structure and guidance, and to create a space where questions, struggles, emotions and doubts are welcome” (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p.78).

I found that as I encouraged them to share about the different masks they have hid or are presently hiding behind, one of the group members shared and then the others did so as well. Some of the masks such as “I got this,” “ I know what I am doing” or “I don’t need anyone’s help” were mentioned. Some shared that some of these masks they had been wearing were from since they were very young. The discussion then centered upon with whom and where do they feel comfortable or ok to remove their masks. Different members shared that removing their masks was hard at times because it made them feel vulnerable. They transparently shared that what others sometimes have seen has been their false selves. DS shared that originally when we started with our group sessions, he was not sure how much he would be opening up and sharing. He stated that the transparent sharing of others so far had tremendously helped him to reconsider his earlier view and willingness to share. I learned as a mentor from this session that it is important to establish an environment where trust and sharing can be fostered, acknowledged and appreciated.

#### **4th Session – Chapter 3 - February 22, 2023 between 8:30 PM and 9:35 PM**

The mirror moment for the week from Chapter 3 was with regards to the topic of “my community.” I prayerfully decided that this 4th session would be another night which I would encourage the mentees to go deeper in their self-awareness. When I asked them to describe the degree of ease they had in asking for help, they all were initially silent. I remembered a take away from my 2/01/2023 class when it was shared by Dr. Wanda Walborn about the need to give people time to think and to not mind the silence while waiting for them to formulate an answer.

The silence ended when FB responded that asking for help is tough. When asked to explain, FB responded that due to past events with his community, he can remember times they provided him with healing and other times when they caused wounding. The other mentees then shared about times in their respective communities which encouraged them to trust or distrust others based upon what members of their community had said or done. Even TB who was usually quiet in previous sessions spoke about asking God to help him transition from being self-reliant to trusting God and others around him. My key take-away as a mentor from this 4th session was with regards to the importance of encouraging my mentees to cultivate emotional and spiritual sharing times with others and also carving out time with God.

#### **5th Session – Chapter 4 - March 02, 2023 between 7:30 PM and 8:40 PM**

The mirror moment topic from Chapter 4 was “my brokenness.” My prayer for the night was for the Holy Spirit to hear what they would share and also give me discernment as to what they might not say but needed to say. I reflected back on what was shared by Anderson in the *Spiritual Mentoring* book that spiritual mentoring “is rather the ministry of participating in what God is already doing in the life of the mentoree. This character defines the nature of spiritual mentoring as a work of sensitive listening and coming alongside another with an open heart” (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p. 51).

When asked about ever feeling broken or anxious, FB responded that he constantly needed to achieve a level of perfection to validate his worth. This had been the case since he was a child due to parental pressure for not accepting anything less than 100% in grades, sports, or life in general. He shared about experiencing a “what is wrong with me” mentality at times and having to pray and believe that God is not requiring 100 % perfection from him. I sensed that a

level of trust had been established between the mentees as well as with them and me. I courageously asked if someone was willing to share about something they now or previously hoped no one would find out.

JH then transparently shared that the one thing he previously hoped no one would find about him was with regards to his addiction to sex. He now feels confident in the love of God and is able to share with others and not allow his former addiction to hold him back. JH stated that his scars became a glory for God of what He is able to do. The transformation has brought him deliverance. I quickly realized that mentors can have moments of heightened emotions when they hear personal testimonies of what God is doing in the lives of others who He has assigned to them. When I read in Dr. Wanda Walborn's Leader's Guide that tears are welcomed, I did not think that would apply to me as well.

#### **6th Session – Chapter 5 - March 09, 2023 between 7:00 PM and 8:20 PM**

The mirror moment for Chapter 5 was with regards to the “lies that we believe.” We also focused on having intimacy with God. Besides reviewing the content of chapter 5 in the book as well as what was outlined in the Leader's Guide, I also reread my class lecture notes from 1/25/2023. I reviewed that Dr. Wanda Walborn had addressed the question, “Is there a lie that the person is believing?” I, like my other classmates, was also requested to consider the following two questions: When did this situation start and what does this person need? I also recalled that Dr. Wanda Walborn had mentioned that discernment would be needed when it came to addressing lies in the lives of individuals.

When asked about having a safe place to be honest about what was really going on in his life, DS spoke about his “man cave.” This was the place where he connected best with the Holy

Spirit. He intentionally spends time with God alone, being transparent and vulnerable. He did not rush these times because he usually felt relaxed and fulfilled after spending time with God. When asked about the lies which prevented him from drawing closer to God, TB shared that the major one was that God was not listening. When it looked like God was delaying His response, it caused TB to start to doubt. TB spoke about the big demands he had personally placed on himself and how he had done the same with God. When asked about the discipline of honesty to help with intimacy with God, FB shared that when he was honest, he had stopped hiding what was really going on. This helped him to remove the shame and for him to realize that God loved him. I discovered that I was growing more comfortable and confident in asking deeper questions and being patient, as well as in offering encouragement to receive their responses.

#### **7th Session – Chapter 6 - March 16, 2023 between 7:00 PM and 8:30 PM**

For week 7, the mirror moment for Chapter 6's discussion was with regards to the topic of fear. When I posed the question to the mentees regarding the fears which they have struggled with, different fears were mentioned. JH shared how the fear of being called out to speak or present what he believed was truth impacted him for years, but it was his mother's example of taking things to God in prayer that had transformed his life. DS joined in sharing that his go-to scripture in times of fear was Proverbs 3. His view was that we are to operate under God's grace and accept the unknowns with an all-knowing God. TB shared that his strategy for overcoming fear was his belief in God, others around him and then a focus on himself as well. Positive affirmation and visualization have also been powerful tools utilized. FB mentioned that as a result of reading chapter 6 and engaging in the discussion, he came to realize that even as we sought to address fear, there could still exist a battle with pride within us. DS expressed how powerful love from God and others, as well as loving ourselves, can be instrumental in

transforming periods of fear into moments of faith. I grew in my understanding from the session, that I must encourage the mentees to take the time to be still before God so that they could hear from Him, have their fears addressed, and allow God to affirm what He is shaping in their lives. Another point which I acquired was that if we are truly children of God, how we treat others matters especially as it relates to them overcoming fear and trusting in God and His goodness to all of us.

### **8th Session – Chapter 7 - March 23, 2023 between 7:00 PM and 8:40 PM**

For week 8, the mirror moment for chapter 7 was with regards to hearing from God. When I asked the group about what thoughts came to their minds when they went to pray, various responses were given. Different members spoke about the difficulty at times of not letting their thoughts run to what they had been recently doing or needed to get done. FB shared that his prayer time was typically 70% speaking to God and 30% taking the time to hear from God. However, if there was a pressing issue, then it was 100% speaking with God. When the discussion shifted to their loudest inner noise that interrupted their intimacy with God, TB responded that his interrupters were overthinking and self-doubting. In the past, he would see or expect the worst to occur. He however shared that since we had been meeting, his prayer time and mustard seed faith had been growing.

When I asked about how to distinguish between God's voice and that of Satan, the following responses were given: 1)FB – God speaks to his heart, 2)TB – God is clear and concise, Satan produces disruption, 3)JH – Satan seeks to persuade you to do something and 4)DS - God is positive, Satan is negative. DG shared about recent breakthroughs which have occurred with regards to our previous group discussions and prayer times over the last eight

weeks. I grew in my understanding as a mentor to encourage mentees to find a secret place to be intimate with God and then to spend more time there listening to than speaking to God.

### **Conclusion**

Each night of the 8-week sessions were valuable opportunities for individual honest and open sharing, as well as collective support and brotherhood to be given in response. “The songs of our soul have already been whispered and sung into our souls. Spiritual mentoring invites us to discover holy ground that is all around us and within, welcoming us to pay attention to the already present action of God” (Anderson and Reese, 1999, p. 44). I pray and trust that I provided a platform for each mentee to sing their song. I also pray that they don’t stop singing and sharing their song as they grow in their intimate times with God and in relationship with others.

## **Bibliography**

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