

SF770 Soul Care
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Personal Growth Development Plan

INTRODUCTION

This course has helped me dig deep inside myself, when I am willing to let God do his work inside of me, he met me and showed me how he is guiding me, how he is shaping me to become the person he wants me to be. I feel like my life is more connected to his heart. Without the true transformation inside, what we learn from the Bible becomes mere knowledge. God has the transformative power in our lives, but we need to humbly and fully surrender and let him do it. And the materials in this course provided very useful methods how to allow God's transformative power to penetrate deep into our soul so we are no longer the same. Life can be truly transformed and connected to Jesus, pretense is no longer necessary.

SELF AWARENESS AND LIFE CHANGE

God has shown me during the pandemic that I needed to balance rest (both spiritual and physical) and activities. And just when I am taking this course, work got so busy while my dad was put on hospice care due to his failing health. It is certainly not a coincidence, God has appointed this time to talk to me, minister to me, transform me, and draw me closer during this

season of valley in my life. God led me to the valley to meet with me one on one. Peter Scazzero's book talked about daily office throughout the day to get close to God¹, it has helped me tremendously when my soul was so weary and needed to slow down. In his book *River Dwellers*², Dr. Reimer talked about to constantly dwell in God's river and never get out. I can do nothing apart from God, he is better than anything in my life. And through his book *Soul Care*³, I learned why I do what I do - I was able to dig deep down inside my soul with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he showed me how my past and family has shaped me, the broken values that I held on to tightly without even realizing that I was actually doing it and the damage that the brokenness has caused in my life. Like Dr. Reimer always said, *Theology 101: God knows things that we don't know*, I have to humbly ask him. And when I asked, he really showed me, God is so good!

SOUL CARE AREAS THAT NEED DEEPER DEVELOPMENT AND PLAN

Breaking Family Sin Patterns

I feel like I was once deeply rooted in my family's values and traditions. I felt guilty not to comply or even deviate from those values because it would mean disunity. Unity and uniformity are highly valued in my family. While unity is good, but uniformity is impractical and impossible. Each person is uniquely created by God, there's diversity even within the family

¹Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017

²Reimer, Rob. *River Dwellers: Living in the Fullness of the Spirit*. Franklin, Tennessee: Carpenter's Son Publishing, 2015.

³Reimer, Rob. *Soul Care: Seven Transformational Principles for a Healthy Soul*. Franklin, Tennessee: Carpenter's Son Publishing, 2016.

- each of us has own preferences, personalities, interests, abilities, etc. I feel like if I am able to discern and understand how to appreciate and encourage our uniqueness within my own family, I will be able to slowly embrace and work with the uniqueness in each person with much more diversity on a broader scale - small groups of people, churches, neighborhoods, communities, cities, states, countries, and ethnicities.

The prevalent sin patterns in my family: mocking, gossip, bitterness, victim mind-set, setting expectations for others to meet, anger when expectations are not met. I want to get out of all of these. I want to be set free. A common theme almost always come up when our family gets together, we would end up talking about how others fail us, ranting about how the pastors are not doing what they should do to build the church up, how people are not meeting our expectations, this person I can't tolerate, that group of people just tick me off, etc. And we would sometimes mock the people or make fun of the situations to make us feel better. But deep down we are hurt and bitter. And I think that's how we opened the door for the enemy to do its work in us, we isolate ourselves from others, refuse to forgive, and struggle in bitterness and despair.

Overcoming Fear

Fear that I would break the unity and peace in my family when I don't do things that meet the expectations of my family has bounded me for years. I reluctantly took up responsibilities in order to keep the peace in my family that stressed me out and eventually led me to feel traumatized. When my mom was really sick in the hospital almost 15 years ago, I remember that my older sister insisted that I slept overnight in the hospital lobby by myself when my mom was

in a coma for days that she later woke up from. I was traumatized from this experience, I then dreaded going to the hospital and taking care of my parents. Following the action steps from Dr. Reimer's book "Soul Care", I asked God to heal me from this fear and experience. Then God reminded me of this dream that I had after I visited my dad in the hospital. One night I dreamed of a man sitting casually in the corner of what I think is the hospital room where my dad stayed in. The man didn't do anything, it was just an image of a man dressed in a colorful shirt, he was nicely dressed and his presence gave me a sense of peace. I asked God if this is from him. He didn't say anything but the sensation of peace remains. I feel like God is assuring me that his angel was present in the hospital where my dad stayed. Next time when I need to visit my dad again, I will recall that vision I had in my dream and I will be reminded that God is here with us. When God is here, fear is gone.

Perfromance Lie

Lastly, I realized that I tend to focus on the negative things people say when they give me comments, and often did not celebrate the good things enough. I do the same thing when I have to critique others, I focus on areas that need improvements. This is especially obvious when I look at the grades my daughter gets. I am more results driven, I want to improve on areas that I'm lacking so I can do better next time. While this helps me to improve, it has also become my perspective. I would even beat myself up at times when I fail to say something the way I wanted. I want to impress others and make them think that I am good at communicating. This has a lot to do with my cultural background, Asian parents never really commend their children, they compare their children with others. This has created unnecessary competition, kids strive so

hard to compete so they don't end up in the bottom and get despised. This is such an unhealthy culture. I feel that at times I still have a desire to impress others with my performance, especially in front of people I don't know, I want to leave a good first impression. When I am nervous when I have to speak or lead worship, I know that my performance driven mind-set kicks in again. I need to go before God and ask him to shift my focus from myself to him. Instead of focusing on how I do, I just focus on God and my anxiousness would be gone.

Plan to Move Forward

One very important thing I learned from this class is to practice to humbly seek the Holy Spirit. God is willing to reveal to us what he knows when we humbly ask him. He gave me valuable insights and helped me connect the dots. I have decided to ask the Holy Spirit often, even when I think I know, I still want to confirm with God and consult with the one who is omniscient. Therefore, for my action plan, I have also sought the Holy Spirit what I should do, since he revealed to me the things I need to focus on. I will consult with him from time to time to see if I need to change things up.

As I reflected on how the brokenness in my family influenced me and how my family cannot overcome these specific sin patterns, God led me to Matthew 10:34-39 one day and gave me insights of how I should handle the brokenness in my family. Jesus says "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'" Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves

their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” This Scripture pierces my heart and soul, each one of us, including my parents and my sisters, should take up their own cross to follow Jesus. At times I felt like it is my responsibility to help them get out of their darkness or brokenness. But I am reminded that I am not their savior - Jesus is. I could not bear their brokenness, Jesus has taken up our brokenness and bore it on the cross, and Jesus loves them more than I do. I should love them but not their brokenness and should not allow their brokenness to affect me anymore. This insight has lifted weighty burden off my shoulders. I felt relieved and comforted.

Going forward, whenever there is a family gathering and if I sense that their brokenness is manifesting, for example, they are being judgmental, or try to portray themselves as victims, etc. I will pray to God to see if I need to say something or keep quiet. I need discernment from the Lord when their brokenness is manifesting. I will pray at the moment to see what God says.

Also I learn that I need to speak out when I feel something is not right, or wait for God’s timing to say it. I pray that God will give me the wisdom and courage to deal with the people that I dread to turn down the most - my family. I felt like they are judgmental people and the fear of breaking the peace and unity caused me to not speak out but blindly oblige. This is one area that is certainly a work-in-progress. I tried it once and it was a big argument with my sisters. But one time I was honest with my mom to tell her that I won’t accept her unreasonable judgement about me and she backed off and stopped insisting her thoughts.

To combat the performance lie, I’m planning to go to God every time I sense that it is manifesting - when I get carried away to improve. I would ask God to show me whether things

are really as bad as I think, if not, I pray that God would adjust my perspective right where I am off, so I can look at success and flaws in a healthier way.

And I also find that spending time before God to worship would humble me and soften my heart to surrender to him. I am touched by his kindness, love, and grace for his people. Through worship, God always leads me to look at how he has watched over my life all these years, I am humbled, and I am willing to surrender to such a wonderful God all over again.