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Omega Graduate School

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***120 Day - Course Learning Journal***

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course and is an integration of the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the *course* journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor consistent with the Tutorial Methodology to express insights gained as a result of the course of study. Submit the course learning journal via DIAL. The course learning journal should be 5-7 pages in length, and should include the following sections:

1. **Introduction** – Describe the expectations of the graduate program and the campus residency component for that course. Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.
2. **Personal Growth** - Describe your personal growth–*how the course stretched or challenged you*– as well as your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – *what new insights or skills you gained.*
3. **Reflective Entry** - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or *adaptation and relevant application*) of new learning into your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?
4. **Future Expectations** - Continue the journal by addressing questions and concerns you now have relating to the graduate program expectations.
5. **Conclusion** – Synthesize the three body sections above, evaluating the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

**Introduction**

Leader Development: Transforming Self-Concept is a course that has intrigued me. I often wondered, what more is there to learn about developing as a leader? I had no idea that being a leader is tied especially to understanding one’s self. Having rules to follow and steps to complete as a leader would be challenging enough. But to truly understand oneself, leaders must know their own developing self-concept to influence others, and make leadership effective. As I look back through my adult life and review the leaders I’ve had, I do admit, that the ones that I remember well and who have made an impact on me are the ones who I know sincerely cared about me, not only my performance, because they understood their own identity through joyful and challenging life experiences.

 As I look at the examples of Jesus Christ as a leader, I’m astounded at how He loved people and met them exactly where they are to influence and motivate them. He knew what to ask of them so they could answer their own questions. It’s exciting to know His questions were about themselves before He asked behavior questions about their performance. How do we exemplify that today as leaders? Are we more concerned with our groups’ performance? The outcomes of our businesses are important. But how do we treat our employees so they are functioning at the level of performance through knowing their true identity?

 We must know ourselves, our identity in Christ and what He has done and continues to do in us. Then, we work with others from the outflow of loving and caring for them. How? By knowing Jesus in a growing intimate relationship. As I continued in this course through readings, videos, class lectures and discussions, my eyes were further opened to the why self-concept in leader development? Through the thoughts of early scholars and philosophers, Christian leaders and educators, I’ve learned that knowing my past and how choices I made or those made for me, does indeed effect my choices as a leader, whether they were happy, peaceful, or sad.

**Personal Growth**

 Leadership development: Transforming Self-Concept is a wonderful course that challenged me in ways I did not anticipate. Firstly, I was reminded of a college course I had taken at Bryan College in the late 70’s, as I studied psychological theories of human

development, to obtain a BA in Psychology. I was so excited to know that now after 40 or more years, I am just beginning to understand the subject. One of the avenues of growing older is that we learn from experiences that God has allowed us to journey through. Being aware of knowledge we obtain is important. But experiencing that knowledge in unpredictable ways is most advantageous to leaders.

 Secondly, trust in relationships is key. As I work with teachers and parents each day, I’m asking Jesus to help me understand what the person in front of me really needs and listening to Him as He tells me. This may involve different stages of child and adult development as teachers and parents want what is best for their child. Discerning what is happening in their lives from their own past experiences is key. This is a long process of relationship. Discerning why they are asking is important. Knowing levels of moral development and listening to their experiences brings more understanding and I eventually know why they have chosen Christian education.

 This is also true of children and adults who are constantly developing in morality. Being an avid listener, ask correct questions, and not judging them for their responses, but being curious about them is key. Calling upon Jesus’ wisdom during conversation is vital for me. Talking with their parents and gaining their trust as a partner in their children’s educational success is essential.

 Thirdly, and unfortunately, culture is a very important element to study and understand as society of adults and children is constantly changing. Family roles are affected, and students do not get to spend as much time with their families. Student influences are most notable in listening to their peers and social media, and they follow norms of society, not families. One of my greatest challenges is whether I will be a transactional leader or transformational leader in culture today. Certainly, I use Romans 12:1 and 2 for me: “Therefore I urge you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies to God, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may know what is that good and acceptable will of God.” Transformation comes from the renewal of my mind. Therefore, I will be a life-long practioner scholar, renewing my mind with the transformational word of Jesus. This just solidifies my journey of study at Omega Graduate School. I will continue to grow through each course.

**Reflective Entry**

 Recently, I’ve had the privilege of interviewing new students and their parents this summer for school entrance in the fall. It’s interesting to note the beginning of the 30-45 minute conversation as it shifts from getting to know them to explaining the mission of our school: love God, love learning, love others. I always begin with, what brought you to consider our school? Many respond with, I wanted my children to get away from public school and I have faith in God, so it just has to be better here, right? It’s hard not to judge them and the response they give, but I immediately have trained myself to think of the next question to understand what they mean in their response.

 A mentor of mine shared the “what, so what, now what” form of asking questions. As I ask them about their faith in God, first, usually I just want them to expound more on their beliefs. Then, can you tell me about your child’s experiences at your previous school? This helps in knowing what the next question will be. Hopefully, I am making connections with them and beginning a trusting relationship. Sometimes, it leads to good school experiences and thoughts about spiritual things.

 The Director of Student Life and I are planning on having personal conferences with each family during the first 6 weeks of school. It’s important for us to have a relationship with them and them with us to maintain a common vision. This is how I believe Jesus is. Not only did He die for us to give us everlasting abundant life, but He also wants a vital relationship with us. Our school has one time per year when we meet parents in conferences to chat about their child. But this is not enough for trusted relationships. Therefore, we want to make a change, starting now. If we are able to make these family conferences within the first few weeks of school, that will be a phenomenal start to a trusting relationship. When challenges arise with students, we will already have developed relationship with parents and together can find a solution to best help the child.

 Just last week, I asked a new student during an interview about what they know about Jesus. Their response was that they knew stories about Him. Then, the question was about relationships. What does that mean to you? Who do you relate to on a consistent basis? Usually, it’s a parent relationship they talk about. It’s exciting to watch students talk about their parents in front of them. Sometimes relationship with a family member is most important, moms, dads, grandparents, depending upon the age of the child. Most middle school students talk about relating to their peers as most important. Parents react to that answer differently. Then, they usually give an excuse as why that happens, and they just don’t have enough time with their children. They do feel sad at admitting this conclusion, but they feel all the other middle school parents are the same.

 All of these questions are a bridge to relating to parents, showing we care enough to ask and listen and build a healthy connection with them. After the interview, we pray for them with much thanksgiving to God. After logistical questions next, it is interesting to receive a firm and loving handshake from parents who remark that they have never had a school interview as this. Looking into their eyes, I’m happy to tell them, this is just the beginning of a trusting relationship with us.

 At the conclusion of an interview, I’m thankful to be chosen and called with a purpose in fulfilling His divine plan through me to others, in this administrative position. Authentic leadership is not for my own purpose, it’s about Him and how His power is used and recognized through me. My experiences in the past have brought me where I am today, be they good circumstances or through personal trauma. I’m thankful for where I am today.

**Future Expectations**

The more I attend classes at Omega Graduate School, and learn new material, the more I realize there is to learn to be an authentic leader scholar practioner. I’m up for the challenge of deeper critical thinking. Romans 5:3-5 paraphrased explains our justification through faith bringing peace in God, not just knowing (head knowledge), but understanding (heart) and experiencing (circumstances). And that tribulation produces perseverance, which produces character and hope. Hope does not make one ashamed because His love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives within us. Many difficulties that we go through can hurt us and during them, we may feel like there is no hope. That there can’t possibly be anything that will help the circumstance for our good, but God…

 Today much trauma and crisis are discussed, and the world’s thinking is that a person is hopeless and scarred for life. That can be true for the unbeliever. However, we know that God is for us and our good. We don’t like difficulties when happens to us and we are uncomfortable watching others go through challenging circumstances. Although these can bring much pain, the outcomes, that can take much time, produces good in us. Trust in Jesus is key to it all. This is an area of study I’d like to pursue and know more about since leader development is important and key to relationship and connecting to others.

 Another key component to further study in leader development is continued listening and talking with experienced leaders of culture today. Listening to pod casts, such as John Stonestreet’s Colson Center’s weekly news, is an important worldview podcast. Occasionally a panel of men and women relate what is happening around the world in culture, and then they ask hard relational questions to the panel of parents, church leaders, and sometime political leaders. Listening to them expound on how they connect with others in their peer groups is helpful.

 We all have different seasons of life in which we live, but we all are affected by what is happening in our world. Synergy, all working together, is key. Even past researchers who identified areas of trauma and crisis use developmental stages of human beings as they have studied outcomes in their own lifetimes. This past study is still pertinent to us today. People long for connection and God, from the foundation of the world, created us with a Spirit that longs for communion with Him. We likewise want connection with others. He models that for us.

 I enjoy learning more from Omega professors! Looking at research data, models, figures, diagrams, and tables is the key to more research as society changes. Understanding what worked well, what didn’t work well, what is the next step to find the answer is another of my goals. Learning what nourishes and stretches me is important. Getting feedback is essential to my continuing leader development. I never thought reading and analyzing researched data would be so enjoyable! But I am learning its importance to speaking to others about the world. If we are to be world changers, we must enjoy this part of research. I’m so glad I get to be a part of further research and form my own data of study to proclaim to the world!

**Conclusion**

Concluding this reflective journal concerning this course is exciting to me. As I am reminded of all that was taught, researched, and discussed, I firmly believe I was challenged to reason and evaluate my personal experience to leader development. Much of it concerned thinking through my own self-beliefs and identity through praying and discussing with other spiritual biblical leaders and counselors.

 What I have discovered about myself is foundational to my continued learning and growing in Jesus Christ. I have made some thoughtful new ideas to use with those I lead: students, parents, and teachers. I will be asking more relational questions to them that build trust and accountability through connections with them. As I show vulnerability myself, I believe they will be more open to relationship. Continued understanding of how I am made in God’s image, to lead others through their own abilities with tasks at hand does not only challenge me and my own character formation, but hopefully theirs, as well.

 I am learning more of myself as I learn and experience Jesus Christ and His life through me. Experiencing continual transformation in Him is foundational to my leader personal development. I’m so excited to share with other administrators. He’s not finished with us, yet. What an affirmation! The more I learn of Him, the more I am assured of His love, and I can share it with others. When I was a child, I memorized John 3:16 and have quoted it through my life. Recently I studied it from the Amplified Bible. “For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life.” Now, that has new meaning after attending this course! We are greatly prized and so loved by Him that we are enabled to believe Him, trust Him, cling to Him, rely on Him. I’m ready for more of Him taught through the Godly professors and leaders of Omega Graduate School. Praise the Lord!

WORKS CITED

*The NASB Bible.* (1995). Zondervan.

*The Amplified Bible*. (1965). Zondervan.