

Formational Goals

Intentional Growth**Short Term Goals**

I have to acknowledge that this paper is a bit of a strange experience for me to write. I am only in the Graduate School of Theology for one year so while I hope I grow throughout my time in the program, my time in it is short lived. And to add to the strangeness, since we had delays in getting our results, I already had a very serious job opportunity by the time I started to write this paper and think about the requirements and qualifications for short-term ministry goals. One of my short-term goals was to find a job in youth and family ministry at a church. From the things I have heard from current youth ministers and the things I have been reflecting on the requirements and qualifications to be a youth minister that I see are: to be spiritually focused, intentionally relational with youth but also with families and volunteers, good at relating with adolescents, having a working knowledge of adolescent processes, be organized, be flexible, be calm in the face of drama or chaos, and be a team player. I think there are more than just those but that list is a starting point. I also think that if you are a female going into congregational ministry there is often a requirement that you have more education or something to set you apart and convince churches to take a risk and step into the gender roles question.

Some of my other short term goals for ministry are more personal. I know they will definitely impact my ministry but they are not as much accomplishments as they are things I want to do or to start off doing in my ministry. For example, I want to set a standard from the beginning of setting boundaries for myself to take time off of work. I think it is crucial to do so if I am going to have a future in ministry and not just a quick trip into it. Setting boundaries includes saying no to extra things; this is a lesson I have been working hard to learn the past few

years but I want to continue to learn it and live it for my own sake but also as an example for the ministers, parents, and students around me. I also have a goal of finding friends outside of the church I work at. I definitely want friends of all ages and life stages from within the church but I think it's important to have some friends who are not always a part of your work, too. They may go to a different church or be ministers as well elsewhere, but I think it is important for me to have friends to hang out and relax with outside of ministry. I also know I need to find mentor(s) and/or a therapist so I can regularly check in on how I am doing and process my life and ministry to keep me healthy and alert. I tend to take things on and keep stuff bottled up because I am used to helping everyone else, but I cannot continue to do that. I also want to become more consistent with my spiritual practices, both spiritual practices for my own life but also for my ministry.

Long Term Goals

My long term goals are to earn a PhD in ministry, become a professor of ministry, and to integrate more fully my ideas from marriage and family therapy with ministry and spirituality. I have been looking at PhD programs since I applied to graduate schools for Master's work. One piece of advice a mentor gave me was that if I wanted to go for a PhD I should choose my Master's program with my PhD in mind so I could try to find something that will set me up to the PhD I want. I found a PhD in Family Ministry that I am really interested in. I am hoping it still exists in five or six years when I get ready to start work on it. Whatever PhD program I pursue, I know I might have to do some leveling work in order to be admitted. I also know I need to start saving up and making financial choices that will enable me to pay for a PhD program rather than put me in a financial bind. When I get to that point I need to find a rhythm for working in ministry while going school; that means setting apart times for each of those as well as continuing to create space to rest and have time off. If I am married and/or have my own

family at that time, I will need to have many talks with them about how achieving that goal will affect all of us and what we need to do to stay healthy as a family.

Becoming a professor is a big motivation for earning a PhD. While technically I could teach undergraduate classes with my Masters' degrees, I would like to have the extra learning and academic credibility from the PhD and to potentially to be able to teach at the graduate level. This is a goal that is well-known among undergraduate Bible faculty at ACU and several people have encouraged me to do this and provided me opportunities to guest lecture as well as to co-teach one undergraduate class. In the future I will need to continue to take advantage of opportunities to guest lecture, present at conferences, and read journals and articles from the academic world. Once I finish or am almost finished with my PhD I will update my resume and begin applying for professor of ministry positions.

Another part of earning a PhD and becoming a professor is also my other long term goal, more fully integrating what I learned in marriage and family therapy with my practice and theology of youth and family ministry. I learned so many things in the therapy program that I think will be useful in ministry but I need to actually see how they connect in real life and what kind of difference they do make. I will be starting this goal in small ways once I start ministry but to really see how it works will take time and patience and other ministers and elders willing to listen to my ideas and help me implement them. I do not want to view students in ministry as guinea pigs for a therapy/ministry experiment and it will not be a formal research study (unless it is part of my PhD work) but I do want to find out if any of my ideas are accurate or beneficial. An example of such an idea: in therapy we talk about how to create lasting change and each model of therapy has its own view of how to do this. One model puts a lot of emphasis on emotional experiences being influential in creating change. That makes me think of emotional

experiences in youth ministry, such as camp highs or going on retreats where everybody comes back on fire for God but three weeks later everything is back to its old routine. I wonder how the therapy model's theories and values could be utilized to make the most of summer camp highs so that when the emotion dies down there are still some things different in the student's life.

Assessment Results and Reflections

Profiles of Ministry

Personal Characteristics. In the area of personal characteristics, three of my strengths were that I am highly likely to acknowledge my limitations, put a high value on mutual family commitment, and put a high value on my involvement in caring for people. I think that acknowledging my limitations is something that comes naturally to me but that I have also been very intentional about over the past few years. I do not want to apologize for every little thing but if I do make a mistake I want to own up to it. I also want to make sure that I am not misrepresenting myself and my abilities so I try to let people know how much or how little help I can be in something. I know I am not gifted at everything but that more than fine with me. I like that mutual family commitment is 2 standard deviations higher than putting ministry first. Not that my ministry is not a priority in my life but I do not want to be a workaholic who puts everything and everyone before the people I love. I understand there are some days where things happen and emergencies come up and ministry comes first, but that should not be everyday or every time. I cannot do everything or save everyone. While I am single with no children, that sounds easy enough to continue as a strength but if I get married and have children, I will need to monitor that to make sure it does not change. I take great pleasure in knowing that involvement in caring is a strength; I think that would be the therapist in me and I worked really hard to

become that. I am naturally a caring and people pleasing person but the therapy program helped me to tune that and hone my skills and ways of perceiving care for other people.

A growth area from personal characteristics would be all three of the potential negatives are marked for me; self-serving behavior, pursuit of personal advantage, and self protecting behavior. I am not sure which one concerns me the most to be the one to focus on first. This is also the area of special concern for me since all three are marked. They could easily become a bad trifecta for my ministry and my life if I do not keep watch on them. I think one thing I could do to help me work on all of these is to have someone(s) to hold me accountable – whether friend, mentor, or therapist. Self protecting behaviors are surprisingly the lowest of the three yet I feel like it would be the one I am most aware of, or at least most consistently aware of. I am an introvert with trust issues so I have a lot of self protecting behaviors and I am always trying to be aware and proactive in these. My goal is not to abandon all of them but to keep them in check and make sure they are really worthwhile if they are in use.

Perspectives on Ministry. My strengths from the perspectives on ministry portion would be a balanced approach to world missions, building congregational community, and conflict utilization. Again I think the therapist in me greatly contributed to the conflict utilization score, as it should. That is a strength I do have to work hard at because naturally I am passive aggressive and a conflict avoider. But I have (and am) learning to face it and deal with it and to do so calmly and matter of factly rather than emotionally. There have been a few times in the past three years where I have stood up for myself or for others and done so firmly but without becoming upset and I view those as examples of this strength. A balanced approach to world missions makes sense because for as long as I can remember I have known that we cannot just do evangelism or just do social justice. We need both and while everyone may not be gifted equally

at both, we need to strive to work together. Building congregational community also makes sense as relationships are a key part of how I view life, church, and God. We are relational by nature and if we want to be the body of Christ we need to take care of and further those relationships. My impact on people will be much greater if I am willing to invest in them and build a relationship and not only do surface level or momentary things with them.

A growth area from these categories would be that aggressive political leadership from the interview is as low as it can go on the score chart. I am not as concerned that the score is so low but that the score of that one from the casebook is three standard deviations higher. I am worried about the gap between those two and what it says about me and how I can go about fixing that. I am not really sure how to fix this but I do think it is something I should pay attention to when I encounter such scenarios in real life. In those times I should really tune in to myself to see if I am extremely conflicted with what I am doing and thinking or with what I want to do versus what others want to do or something else.

Type Focus

Much to my surprise but also my delight I am an INTJ. Since high school I have been an ISTJ every time I have taken Type Focus/Myers Briggs. Reading the definitions of S and N, an N much more accurately reflects who I am and how I process things since coming to ACU. Again, the therapy training really shaped the S into an N. I am always looking for meanings, relationships, patterns, possibilities, big pictures, etc. I want to know the facts and the reality but I have come to see that each person's reality is different and while people experience the same realities, their perceptions of those same things can be different. In therapy we worked with what

our clients told us because it was either their reality or the reality they wanted to be true. That has stayed with me since then and really impacted how I view everyday interactions.

Something I learned from the profile would be an understanding of why I am always looking for larger purposes and theories behind everything. Those are aspects of being an INTJ and to me they seem natural but I guess to other people they are not and I should remember that when I am on a team because I may want to dig deeper into reasons and whys when everyone else is ready to move on to the next thing. A concern is the possible stress of not sharing feelings with close friends. I definitely do that. I often feel like I do not want to burden them because sometimes they have more going on than I do and it does not seem right or fair to me that I should vent or complain when my problems are not as big or bad. But I need to get over that. I at least need to have one or two people I share those things with because it will come back to hurt me in the long run. Follow up for learning I am an INTJ is to plan me time each week before I start my ministry job in June. I like to plan ahead and I have already been thinking about what I need to do when I get that but that needs to include the plan for me setting boundaries and taking time to myself. If I can set that precedent early in ministry it has a better chance of lasting and allowing me to deal with stress each week rather than letting it build up inside.

EQi

At first I was not sure what to make of my scores on the EQi because I did not have anything that was exceptional functioning and that seemed worrisome and a little surprising to be honest. I especially thought empathy would be higher since I had just finished a therapy program when I took this assessment. I kept reading and dwelling on the scores and eventually found

some peace about them. I do think they are fairly accurate at least in most categories. The results are not bad I just had trouble seeing them reflected in my life at first.

An insight into these results would be the correlation between stress tolerance and emotional self-awareness. I have known I have both of these qualities for a long time and have greatly relied upon them in ministry and school. I had never really thought too much about how these two qualities work well together. I have known people who are highly emotionally self-aware yet do not know how to handle stress; they know they are stressed but they do not know how to get rid of the stress. On the other hand I have seen people who can manage and get rid of stress but have little ability to make sense of what just happened and everything they were feeling and experiencing. I like that those two qualities were fairly equal for me because I think having them work together will be better in the long run. A concern is definitely the happiness score. It is not a super surprising score and I do wonder what it would be now, a few months later when life looks a little different. I need to be able to enjoy life more. I am fairly even keeled most of the time but sometimes that keeps me from fully experiencing my emotions and life, both good and bad. I am hopeful life will be happier and more enjoyable in the future but I do need to check in on that and see if that is the case. And not just check once a few months into starting ministry but regularly check because eventually the newness and excitement wears off.

A follow up plan from the EQi results would be to capitalize on my emotional self-awareness and build in time to specifically check that each day. I can do this personally but I can also do this as part of a spiritual discipline and do it with God or looking to see how God was at work during the day. Having this type of check in each day will allow me to process things as they come up rather than letting them simmer and become bigger issues. It might also help me increase my happiness by recognizing more of the good and enjoyment in each day.