

QUARTERLY RETREAT JUNE 2024 END OF YEAR REVIEW

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Introduction

Begin by reading Ted Loder's poem, "Ground Me in Your Grace," from *Guerillas of Grace*.

Eternal One,
 Silence
 from whom my words come;
Questioner
 from whom my questions arise;
Lover
 of whom all my loves are hints;
Disturber
 in whom alone I find my rest;
Mystery
 in whose depths I find healing
 and myself;
enfold me now in your presence;
 restore to me your peace;
 renew me through your power;
 and ground me in your grace.

Of these descriptors of God – Silence, Questioner, Lover, Disturber, Mystery – which one or two did you most encounter this year? In what ways? What did that aspect of God show you about God? About yourself?

Another year of ministry is drawing to a close. Whether it is your first year or your 50th year, whether it was graced with increase or befuddled by hurdles, our work is an opportunity to understand ourselves better and encounter God in the ups and downs of ministry. It is a good time to take stock; to review the year with Jesus helping us to see more clearly.

Scripture Engagement

Luke 10: 1- 12; 17-20

¹ After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go on your way; I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' ⁶ And if a person of peace is there, your peace will rest on that person, but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets

and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹² I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” ¹⁸ He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. ¹⁹ Indeed, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

Read this passage once through, and then read it a second time, more slowly, stopping and pausing at the places that seem to grab your attention. When you pause, simply jot down in your journal, what got your attention, ask what the connection is to your life currently. After you’ve finished, read through it one more time.

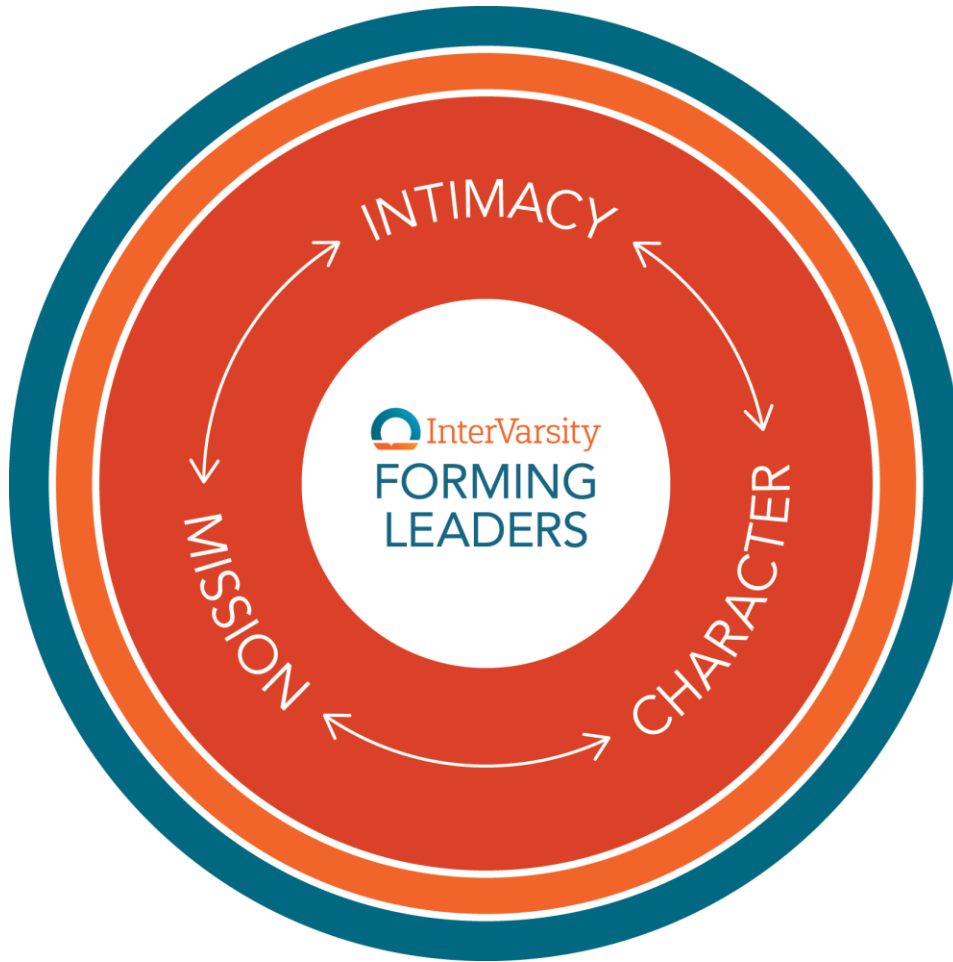
1. What do you notice about the experience of the seventy-two?
2. What stands out to you about Jesus in this passage?
3. What is important to you about “where he himself intended to go?”
4. What feelings arise in you as you hear Jesus say, “I’m sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves”? Why might he do this?
5. As you think back on this year, when were the times that you noticed you were leaning more heavily into dependence upon God? Did you feel like a lamb amidst wolves?
6. When did you notice your spiritual authority? (If you have trouble with this, consider asking a peer or a student leader whom you trust when they saw you with spiritual authority this year.)
7. Jesus sent you out this year. You may not have gone out as a pair, like these seventy-two, but you did go out paired with the Holy Spirit. Look back on this year with Jesus, without judgment, and without a measuring stick: what were your highlights? What were your challenges? What surprises did you encounter?
8. What joy do you have in this past year of ministry? Tell Jesus. Describe each of the “scenes” to Jesus. Tell him what gave you joy. Describe what it meant to you to have had each of these experiences. And then, as you recall these “scenes” in your memory, invite Jesus to show you where he was and what he was doing or saying in each one.

Personal Reflection

We have an opportunity each year (well, really, each day, and week and month, too!) not solely to engage in ministry – TO DO – but to grow as ministers, as individuals, children, God’s beloved – TO BE. Ministry is not just about serving God. Leadership is not just about what we do and how we do it. Leadership is about who we are and who we are becoming. This is why our spiritual formation is essential. Don’t be fooled! We are being spiritually formed every day by the choices we make and neglect to make. Taking the time to look at our lives and reflect on those choices will shape the way we are spiritually formed.

You see, what is on the inside of us, flows out into our ministry. If my heart is cramped by comparing my performance to a colleague’s performance, then my ministry is going to be about anxiously producing numbers because numbers make me feel good about myself. If my head is riddled with memories of being criticized, then I will be defensive whenever I receive feedback, instead of receiving it as an invitation to improve a skill or even to be corrected in love. On the contrary, if I know deep in my heart that although I have messed up royally in my life, Jesus forgives me, when a student leader bails on a responsibility, I don’t go ballistic on them, but can instead reach out in a non-anxious way with grace.

Here's a paradigm we've been working with:



This red circle depicts our formation as leaders in three important dimensions: INTIMACY, CHARACTER and MISSION. Furthermore we can think of it as growing:

In Christ in INTIMACY

Like Christ in CHARACTER

With Christ in MISSION

Now, look back over your year with Jesus, without judgment. This is a time to explore where you are, where you have come from, and where you think you need to go.

Intimacy

1. How comfortable are you in intimacy with Jesus? How free do you feel in baring your soul to Jesus? How has your prayer life grown or diminished this year? What factors led to this?
2. How comfortable are you with others? What does intimacy or trust look like with your friends? Where do you struggle with intimacy? Who can you be completely at home with? How often are you in this person's company? How have you grown in intimacy or trust with others this year? What factors led to this growth?

Character

1. A good way to understand the character of Jesus is to look at the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5: 22). As you think back over this year, where did you sense God building specific fruit in you?

2. Oftentimes, our character is shaped in the fire – difficult times, conflicts, places of stress or hardship. What moments did you experience this year where you felt an invitation to grow in Christ-like character? What happened? What was the result? How did you experience God during this time?

Mission

1. As you went about engaging in ministry this year, when did you experience Jesus being with you in an indelible way? What was that like? When did you feel like you were out there on your own? What was that like?
2. How did you feel empowered by the Holy Spirit this year? When did that seem to be missing? Explore that a bit – what was going on for you? Was there something you could have done to help connect you more with God as you were engaging in mission?
3. As Jesus looks back with you on this year, where do you sense he was most pleased? Ask him why that is so.

Looking to the Horizon

Get into this place of sitting in the loving gaze of Jesus. You are welcome here. You belong here. This is the best place to be and nothing else matters right now except to breathe in this deep, abiding love that fills you, body, heart, mind and soul. (Hint: Every day I go to an imaginary place in my mind to do this – it's my special place – a big lush field, under an immense oak tree, producing beautiful gorgeous shade, as a gentle breeze blows the branches. There I sit with Jesus, face-to-face.) Find your place.

Now, ask Jesus what he wants for you for next year. How does Jesus want you to grow in INTIMACY, CHARACTER, and MISSION? Take some time to journal what you hear.

CONCLUSION

Spend some time giving thanks for this time. Take a walk or bike ride and reflect on what stood out from your time. If you are retreating with a friend or your team, make sure you have time together to share the graces of the retreat. Consider closing the time with The Lord's Prayer or other prayer or worship song that is meaningful to you.