ABSTRACT

MINISTRY MENTORING MATTERS:  BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTORING

NEW PASTORS

by

Keith Koteskey

The transition from academic preparation to vocational ministry is challenging for new pastors who must translate classroom learning to the everyday praxis of ministry, all while navigating issues they had not anticipated. Especially valuable to the novice pastor is the interactive, dialogical relationship with an experienced ministry mentor, someone who can be always available and who speaks from the practical experience of ministry. The literature on mentoring provides valuable guidance from the perspective of mentors, but little research has been done to consider mentoring practices from the perspective of the mentee pastor in their first few years of ministry.

This research study identified best practices for multi-generational mentoring for graduates of the Christian Ministries programs at Bethel University (Indiana) who are transitioning to full time pastoral ministry. The project utilized a mixed methods research design with fifteen personal interviews, two focus groups, and a survey to identify the needs of new pastors, the mentoring practices that best address those needs, and the effective practices that other institutions of higher learning utilize for facilitating the mentoring of graduates.

This study found that new pastors value the help of a mentor in dealing with issues of establishing healthy work-life balance, adapting to higher levels of administrative work tasks, and dealing with the complex dynamics of "messy" ministry

situations. In addition, the availability of a mentor at all times, the help in reframing

perspective through active listening, and the asking of questions were especially valued

as mentoring practices.

MINISTRY MENTORING MATTERS:
BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTORING NEW PASTORS


A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary




In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry




by

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though it seems cliché to say, noting that this project has definitely not been a solo effort is important. So many folks have in some way contributed to the effort, and to them I owe a significant debt of gratitude. I'm certainly thankful for the persons who agree to serve as the research subjects for this project: Graduates of Bethel University's Christian Ministries degree program who opened their lives and ministry experiences in wonderfully transparent ways and professors who despite busy schedules invested time in sharing valuable information in the survey.

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**CHAPTER 1**

**NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

**Overview of the Chapter**

This project identifies best practices for multigenerational mentoring for

graduates of the Christian Ministries program at Bethel University (Indiana) during their

first few years of pastoral ministry. These graduates face a challenging transition from

formal educational preparation to the nitty gritty of everyday ministry. Failure to make

that transition effectively places pastors and congregations at risk. Likewise, the

effectiveness of mission is hindered when pastors are not able to effectively translate

classroom learning to the praxis of ministry.

By building on research from fields such as mentoring in business, identity

development in young adults, adult learning, and generational theory, this study utilized a

mixed methods research design to identify the needs of new pastors that require

additional learning, the mentoring practices that would best address those needs, and

effective practices other institutions of higher learning utilize for mentoring graduates.

This study establishes mentoring practices that will enable new pastors to succeed in

fulfilling their ministry calling.

**Personal Introduction**

Some twenty-five years ago, I launched into pastoral ministry after three intensive

years of study for my M.Div. degree. Even before beginning that academic preparation,

my calling to ministry was discerned through the wise guidance and inspiration of a

mentor. Now, after rigorous academic work, I was confident that I was well-prepared and

knew all that I would need to know to be able to fulfill my calling effectively and

successfully. My seminary program had included supervised ministry internships in both a hospital and local church setting. I had made some minor mistakes and learned from them. I had seen some minor successes and was encouraged by them. I believed that my preparation for ministry had reached its conclusion. I thought that I knew pretty much all I needed to know about pastoral ministry. I would not have said that in so many words, but if I'm honest about how I *felt*, that's a fair characterization. I had confidence – and a little too much of it. Then I began working in full time pastoral ministry and discovered that those assessments were not necessarily accurate.

While I appreciate the educational preparation that I received as a part of my seminary program and believe it to have been of high quality, and while I am grateful that internship experiences were a part of that preparation, I quickly discovered that my formal, degree-seeking education could only accomplish a portion of what was needed for my ministerial calling to be fulfilled effectively. Some of what I still needed to learn could be gained from further reading, but I began to discern that a new channel of influence would be especially productive for my professional growth: The wisdom and experience of a mentor from whom I was learning in the context of relationship.

For my first appointment in ministry, I served as an associate pastor under a senior pastor who met with me weekly. Our conversations during those lunches together always involved my work in ministry (though they were not limited to that topic). Unsurprisingly, they included report and accountability processes for my job responsibilities, but I soon noticed that I began asking deeper questions and was gaining rich insight into the nature of ministry from his answers. In addition, I was carefully observing what the senior pastor did and often adapting my own practice of ministry to

resemble his more closely. Now, more than two decades later, as I reflect on those experiences, I am profoundly aware that often I was "catching" the nature of ministry from my time working with the senior pastor in addition to acquiring more formal knowledge through his ministry supervision and debriefing conversations.

As I look back on those early years of full-time ministry, I am aware of the influence of two mentors. Pastor Phil Emerson, the first senior pastor with whom I worked, taught me how to love people in practical ways and how to cultivate a pastor's heart. Pastor Charles Lake taught me valuable insights about leading a church and preaching. Overstating the influence of these two mentors who not only better equipped me for ministry, but also drew my attention to the vital role a mentor can play, particularly in that transition from formal education to the everyday praxis of ministry, is difficult.

Though their direct influence in my life and ministry is now in the distant past, I was recently reminded of the power of that relationship. About two years ago, I crossed paths with one of these mentors at a conference. Reconnecting over dinner and several other moments of conversation brought back meaningful memories and, at the same time, engaged active learning as if time and distance had never separated us. Yet even more significant for me was when, as the conference came to conclusion, we embraced to say good-bye and my mentor said to me, "I'm so very proud of you." "Something" happened inside me in that moment. I experienced a deep and profound sense of affirmation that was quite surprising. Though much time had elapsed since this pastor had formally invested in my life and ministry through a mentoring relationship, I experienced a

significant emotional response that suggested a level of influence heretofore unrecognized.

After working for twenty-one years in pastoral ministry, I now serve as a professor of Christian Ministries at Bethel University in Mishawaka, IN, where I teach students who are preparing to launch out into local church ministry as lead pastors, associate pastors, and youth pastors. Even though I have only been teaching for six years, I hear regularly in conversations with our recent alumni of the challenges facing graduates in those first years of full-time ministry, particularly for those who serve in places where they have little supervision or cooperative ministry with others. Though their university education has prepared them in some ways for the work they do, many circumstances exist in which learning must come either by personal discovery or by the wisdom and encouragement of a more seasoned pastor.

Recently I facilitated the hiring of one of our graduates by a small, rural church in a nearby midwestern state. In conversations with the denominational regional director for that area, I noted the significant lack of experience this student has. A one-semester internship in ministry with valuable supervision and formal reflection was a part of the student's curricular program at our university, but both of us knew that this was far short of the significant real-life experience that would eventually make this pastor effective. The response of the regional director was to assign a retired pastor from that same district as a mentor for this novice pastor. The move struck me as not only wise, but especially desirable and prompted in me to ask the question: What if this were available for all our Christian Ministries graduates during their first few years of full-time pastoral ministry?

If such an offering were available, what practices could such a program utilize that would ensure its effectiveness in helping graduates make this significant transition to ministry?

**Statement of the Problem**

The transition from academic life as a student to vocational life as a pastor can be a challenging one. Though students gain some degree of practical experience through their required internship experiences, a significant gap still exists between what they know upon graduation and what is required for meaningful ministry longevity. New pastors seem to struggle to some degree with drawing important boundaries in their lives, such as sabbath, family time (in cases of those who are married or have children), etc. These new pastors move from "student life" that ebbs and flows based on fifteen-week semesters (with breaks in between) to living independently with major job responsibilities that are ongoing and sometimes require strange hours. In many situations, these new pastors are the sole pastor of a small congregation in a small community where to feel (yea, even *to be* truly) isolated is easy with the absence of meaningful friendships and often the absence of pastoral resources. Many more matters likely exist that create challenges during this vital transition season.

In addition to the transitional nature of this life season and vocation, a new pastor has limited resources available to address the complex challenges of local church ministry. Books, articles, blogs, and other helpful resources have limitations and require an informed, critical judgment. The availability of these types of resources on the internet is valuable but sorting through the myriad of options and adequately discerning their varying degrees of usefulness may be challenging for a new pastor. More valuable is the

interactive, dialogical relationship with a seasoned pastor who is always available and who speaks from the practical experience of ministry.

While much of this seems intuitive to many in ministry (both novice and experienced), a significant need exists to identify the specific mentoring practices which are most effective in assisting that transition. Identifying best practices for mentoring will enable Bethel's graduates (and perhaps those from other institutions as well) to make the strongest, most effective start to their service in ministry while avoiding unnecessary pastoral attrition.

## Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this research was to discover the best practices for multi-generational mentoring for graduates of the Christian Ministries programs at Bethel University (Indiana) who are transitioning to full time pastoral ministry.

## Research Questions

The effectiveness of such a mentoring program rests on an adequate understanding of the needs such graduates have in their early years of ministry as well as discernment of practices that will most effectively address these needs.

### Research Question #1

What needs and challenges do ministry graduates face in their first few years of ministry that require counsel and/or assistance from experienced mentors?

### Research Question #2

What mentoring practices have most effectively helped new pastors with those needs and challenges?

**Research Question #3**

What best practices do other learning institutions and denominational

organizations use for mentoring graduates in the first few years of ministry?

**Rationale for the Project**

While not prescribing mentorship as a requirement, Scripture presents a rich

description of the role of relational learning in preparation for leadership. The Old

Testament presents Joshua as a protégé to Moses for an extended period and highlights

this educational exposure as effectively preparing Joshua for taking up the baton of

leadership when the time came. Numbers 11.28 describes Joshua as having been an aide

to Moses "since youth." At several points, Joshua is described as at Moses' side (Exod.

24.13; 32.17; 33.11). As Moses' death approaches, Deuteronomy 31.14 describes the

Lord as instructing both Moses and Joshua to present themselves before the Lord so that

God might commission Joshua as successor to Moses.

In the New Testament, a mentoring relationship is at the heart of the discipleship

process that Jesus uses with the Twelve in which adult learning is facilitated in the

context of dialogical relationship with a teacher. Mark 3.14 describes Jesus as calling the

twelve to "be with him" and to go out to preach and engage in additional forms of

ministry such as casting out demons. Later in his ministry, Jesus does, indeed, send them

out in at least two instances with instructions and, when they return, debriefs with them

providing additional insights, and, in at least one case, mild rebuke (Matt. 10.1ff, Mark

6.7ff, Luke 9.1ff, 10.1ff). The final commission Jesus gives his disciples to "go and make

disciples of all nations" marks a completion of this mentoring process and a calling to go

and do as they have experienced.

New Testament descriptions of Paul's ministry reveal a mentoring process in the preparation and ongoing development of others who are engaged in the mission. Descriptions of Paul bringing along Titus on his travel to the Jerusalem council (Gal. 2.1) and taking Timothy on his second missionary journey (Acts 16.1ff) describe a developmental relationship that includes close association. The later pastoral epistles continue to demonstrate both the warmth of relationship and the ongoing teaching/learning aspect of that relationship. Mentoring as a strategic and intentional process of ministry preparation is a practice deeply rooted in the biblical tradition.

New pastors—Timothys and Tituses of our day—are transitioning to ministry from educational institutions. While the academic preparation they provide is valuable and important, such preparation has limits. Even a curricular program that includes an internship or field education component cannot prepare the student for the range of experiences that will be involved in effective ministry. Even the most intelligent, most gifted, and most adaptable new pastor needs the insight and wisdom that comes from the experience of others to supplement and inform knowledge gained in the classroom. A significant difference exists between the experience of learning in the classroom and the performance of ministry tasks in a real-life setting. For pastors making the transition from formal education to full-time ministry, research-informed best practices of mentoring are essential for effectiveness.

Additionally, the churches where these new pastors go are much more effectively served by pastors who are continuing to learn and develop with the resource of an experienced mentor. People in these churches have significant spiritual needs that a require a well-resourced shepherd. Responses to these needs have eternal consequences.

For the members of these churches to be well equipped to carry out the ministry of the church (Eph. 4.11-14) requires a pastor who is continuing to progress and learn through a research-informed mentoring process. Saying that the effectiveness of the gospel mission is at stake is no understatement.

Finally, ministry performance aside, the psychological and spiritual health of these new pastors are an important consideration. The statistics with regard to stress and health of pastors paint a concerning picture. One survey of pastors who self-identified as either Evangelical or Reformed reported some 53 percent of pastors feeling like their seminary education did not adequately prepare them for ministry (Krejcir 6). Likewise, a survey by Fuller Theological Seminary reported some 90 percent of pastors as perceiving themselves to be inadequately prepared to address the challenges of ministry (Wilson and Hoffmann 31).  This transition from formal academic education to the pragmatic realities of full-time pastoral ministry takes a toll on the health of these new pastors. Research-informed mentoring has the potential to improve the health of pastors (and their families), which also better serves the congregations they serve.

**Definition of Key Terms**

For purposes of this study, the following terms require specific definition.

**Mentoring**

In this study, mentoring refers to a specialized, intentional adult learning process for effectiveness in ministry that occurs within the context of personal relationship. Though popularly viewed as a one-to-one type of relationship, a growing body of research is indicating that a mentoring community may hold even better promise for learning and development (Daloz; Daloz et al.; Mullen).

**Multigenerational**

Multigenerational refers to involving people from different seasons of life and levels of experience in ministry. Given that the central concern in this study is with graduates from a traditional, liberal arts undergraduate Christian Ministries program, the new pastors are of a young adult generational cohort that has certain characteristics and is in a particular season of life. Those who might serve as mentors for these pastors come from a different generation, have gained valuable experience, and are in a different season of adult life.

**Pastoral Ministry**

Pastoral ministry refers to pastoral leadership of a church or a ministry segment of a church (*e.g.*, middle school and high school youth). This leadership may include responsibility for congregational worship leadership, regular teaching of the Bible and theology, pastoral care (and perhaps counseling), articulation of vision, and equipping and mobilization of people for ministry.

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**Delimitations**

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The focus of this study was graduates of the traditional liberal arts Christian Ministries program at Bethel University (Indiana) who are serving in vocational ministry. These graduates were identified through consultation with the alumni office at the university and the Department of Religion and Philosophy in which the Christian Ministries major is housed. In large measure, these pastors serve in congregations that are Evangelical in theological orientation. In addition, the study included professors from universities and seminaries who are members of the Council of Christian Colleges and

Universities, and, therefore, are similar to Bethel in graduating students who serve in pastoral ministry.

## Review of Relevant Literature

Much of the popular literature, specifically in the field of Christian mentoring or mentoring for ministry, is more anecdotal in nature and is often written by those who are considered successful (defined in multiple ways) in Christian leadership (*e.g.*, Biehl; Elmore *Mentoring;* Engstrom; Wright *Mentoring*). Likewise, the insights in the writing are often shared from the perspective of an experienced leader who has been doing the mentoring of younger and less experienced people. Stanley and Clinton's work on mentoring references their survey research among leaders but does not provide details of the research design or data collection and analysis. Their results identify types of mentoring with suggested mentoring practices identified according to type and context. The degree to which these practices emerged from the survey data is not clear.

Academic research and theory more broadly in the field of mentoring arose initially in the context of developmental psychology, and such work particularly points to the value of this learning relationship at key points in the life-cycle development of an adult. Levinson et al. had noted this in their initial work on the topic, and others have further described and explained the experience (e.g., Bridges; Bridges and Bridges; Daloz; Daloz et al.). Given the research's particular focus on that transition in the life of young adults entering the work world, this research spawned a significant movement to address its vocational implications.

Much of the academic mentoring research has focused on the context of the corporate world where the mentoring relationship was seen as valuable tool for employee

development, particularly regarding future promotion in management and leadership roles. Kram's early work established a trajectory that focused on mentoring functions, such as career and psychosocial support with the later additions of role-modeling in some cases, and on the phases of the mentoring relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Kram and Lynn; Kram *Mentoring at Work;* Haddock-Millar). Other work has highlighted the fact that, in most cases, a mentor does not have a single such developmental relationship but rather a set of such relationships, initially anticipated with the concept of a "constellation" of relationships but later re-conceptualized as a developmental network (e.g., Higgins and Kram; Higgins and Thomas).

Since the mentoring relationship is educational in nature, theory and research from adult learning provides valuable insight about context and practice for mentoring. Self-directed learning (SDL), first described by Knowles and developed by others particularly in the context of mentoring practices (Zachary) suggests the importance of the involvement of the learner in planning, implementing, and assessing their own learning. This research has significant implications for the emphasis on initiative by the mentee in mentoring relationships, suggesting that the mentor, while serving as guide, should not usurp the important role of self-direction in the learning relationship by the mentee. Research in the field of transformational learning emphasizes the importance of seeing learning not as a one-way, linear process in which a teacher passes along information that a student is to absorb, but rather a dynamic process in which a teacher facilitates a student's critical reflection on his or her own questions and issues (Mandell and Herman; Mezirow "Learning to Think Like"). Experiential learning theory pioneered

by Kolb (1984) provides valuable insight in its emphasis on the dynamic interaction of experience/behavior in the environment and critical reflection on that experience.

Generational theory and research also speak to this time of transition both in providing important contextual description of the nature of those in this generation who are graduating but also in terms of the interplay with those of other generations who may be able to provide vital insights through a mentoring relationship. While not necessarily so, many mentoring relationships are intergenerational, and certainly the influence involved is shaped by generational values and foci. Two "generations" as defined in the research are of particular interest to this study: Millennials and Gen Z. Research shows that millennials are in general very relationship-focused, view authority and respect as earned, are comfortable with doubt, and are concerned with depth and the balance of work and life (Erlacher; Sbanotto and Blomberg), all of which have implications for the effective practice of mentoring. Research regarding Gen Z is in its early stages as this generation is only beginning to transition to adulthood. Such research seems to show that individual freedom is the highest value for this emerging generation (White). Members of this generation also value working collaboratively, are strongly committed to environmentally responsible work/living, and are deeply dependent on mobile internet connectedness (White). The most effective mentoring practices are thoughtfully employed in conjunction with contextual generational concerns.

## Research Methodology

This project identifies practices that will best enable multigenerational mentoring of pastors in their first few years of pastoral ministry by learning from those pastors about their greatest needs in that vocational season. Additionally, data is drawn from Bethel

University alumni pastors regarding what mentoring practices have been most helpful to them and to others they have helped. Finally, the insights of other educational institutions also inform conclusions.

**Type of Research**

This study utilized a pre-intervention mixed methods research design that included interviews, focus groups, and surveys. The use of interviews and focus groups (qualitative methods) allowed for greater depth and rich description of the experience of graduates in their first years of vocational pastoral ministry (Marshall and Rossman 109-10, Patton 227). The use of surveys (a more quantitative method) with two different populations possessing different perspectives allowed for greater breadth (Patton 227). This multi-method approach provided the means for most in-depth discovery of beneficial mentor practices (Swinton and Mowat 48).

**Participants**

The primary subjects for this study were graduates of the Christian Ministries program at Bethel University who are nearly all in their first five years of pastoral ministry. One subject had been in ministry for six years. Given their station in ministry, their responses provide meaningful insight into the felt needs of graduates during these vital transitional years. They were located through data provided by the alumni office at Bethel University and the Department of Religion and Philosophy in which the Christian Ministries major is housed. Fifteen of the subjects were male and five were female. Eighteen were Caucasian, and two subjects identified themselves as being of two or more races. They came from a variety of ministry locales including rural, small town or rural city, suburb of a larger city, and a metropolitan city.

In addition, the study collected data from experienced pastors who are graduates of Bethel University and who have been serving in pastoral ministry for more than seven years. These five subjects provided valuable insight about not only the needs of pastors early in their ministry, but also the mentoring practices that were most helpful in addressing those needs during their ministry. Data collected from universities and seminaries provides broader perspective on effective practices.

**Instrumentation**

Four instruments were used in this project:

1. The Newer Pastor Interviews gathered data from the perspective of those new to ministry with reference to challenges and opportunities that may most helpfully be addressed by mentoring relationships.

2. The Newer Pastor Focus Group gathered additional data regarding the challenges and needs experienced by those in their first few years in a vocational ministry context as well as practices by mentors that have been helpful to them.

3. The Experienced Pastor Focus Group gathered data from pastors who have been serving in ministry for more than seven years regarding the challenges and opportunities they experienced in ministry both in that transition from education to ministry and in mentoring others in making that same transition.

4. The Institutional Practices Survey gathered data from other academic institutions on the use and encouragement of mentoring practices for students making the transition from formal education to vocational ministry.

**Data Collection**

The researcher conducted interviews with graduates of Bethel University who are in their first seven years of pastoral ministry. In addition, focus groups were conducted with newer pastors and (separately) with experienced pastors. The transcriptions from these interviews provided data for qualitative analysis. In addition, a web-based survey was administered to faculty members in Christian Ministries programs at universities and seminaries that are like Bethel.

**Data Analysis**

The interview and focus group transcripts were initially analyzed inductively to identify recurring themes, and then were coded according to those themes. The data from the Institutional Practices Survey was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis to determine breadth of effectiveness and strength of various mentoring practices.

**Generalizability**

This study was conducted with graduates of Bethel University who serve in pastoral ministry. Nearly all serve within the broader Evangelical Christian tradition. One serves as a pastor in an American mainline denomination, the United Methodist Church. Though future research would be needed for confirmation, the findings of this study will likely be meaningfully applicable to similar college-to-ministry transitions of students from other colleges and universities in the evangelical Christian tradition.

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**Project Overview**

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Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to the project. The biblical and theological foundations of mentoring are considered as is the research on mentoring as a practice of adult learning. Business literature on mentoring and advisory groups provides insight as

does the work on adult identity. Finally, generational theory and research informs an understanding of the primary subjects of this project both in terms of their context but also the potential contributions a multigenerational mentoring experience may provide. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research design and methodology in detail. Chapter 4 describes the analysis of the data which was collected. Chapter 5 lays out the major findings from this study and offers thoughts on next steps and application for mentoring of new graduates in the early years of their ministry.

**CHAPTER 2**

**LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT**

**Overview of the Chapter**

This project seeks to identify best practices for multigenerational mentoring of university graduates in their first few years of full-time pastoral ministry. While a great deal of research has addressed mentoring within the business field, much of the literature on mentoring for pastoral formation is anecdotal and is drawn from the personal experiences of leaders viewed as effective in their churches or organizations. Best practices can be informed by much of this literature, but the specific methods employed here will help identify those practices most effective in the specific context of full-time vocational ministry.

This chapter reviews insights from the literature relevant to mentoring and adult learning. The chapter begins with a review of the biblical and theological foundations of mentoring. That review is followed by insights drawn from the literature around spiritual and ministry mentoring. Consideration is then given to the contributions of research from the business mentoring literature. Because mentoring involves a learning relationship, attention is given to the relevant application of research in adult education. Finally, insights from generational research are addressed as they inform mentoring practices for the subjects of this study.

**Biblical Foundations**

**Wisdom Literature**

Given the nature of a mentoring, traditionally conceived as a more experienced (perhaps older) person imparting wisdom to a less experience (perhaps younger) person,

the wisdom literature of the Old Testament provides fertile ground for a Scriptural

foundation of this process. In particular, several proverbs, particularly in Proverbs 13,

speak directly to the importance and value of counsel from the wise (Engstrom 35).  For

example, Proverbs 13.14 emphasizes the impact such wisdom can have: "The teaching of

the wise is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death" (NRSV). A few

verses later, this wise counsel is described in the context of relationship: "Whoever walks

with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools suffers harm" (Prov. 13.20).

Such advice implies clearly that others, especially those who are more

experienced and wiser, have something valuable to offer. A *wise* mentee does well to

recognize this. In addition, throughout this chapter of Proverbs heeding the wisdom of

others is contrasted sharply with the more foolish route of refusing to listen. Schwab

summarizes the theme concisely as follows: "True wisdom is to be teachable" (544).

Critical to the learning process in a mentoring relationship is a humility of heart that not

only is open to the wise counsel of another but actively seeks, receives, and appropriates

the wisdom of others. The opposite—pride and arrogance—prevents one from benefiting

from such wisdom (Murphy 97). The *wise* mentor cultivates a humility of heart that

makes him or her teachable.

**Examples of Mentoring for Ministry Leadership**

Scripture is replete with examples of caring relationships of influence that have a

mentoring nature. Elmore, for example, identifies at least thirty-two such

people/relationships (*The Greatest Mentors*). These relationships are for varied purposes,

and many have very little description given to process and practice. Deborah gives wise

instruction to Barak regarding military strategy in protecting God's people and eventually

her very presence in providing courage. Naomi offers Ruth godly counsel and empathetic friendship. David provides wisdom and loyalty to his men amid the efforts to avoid Saul's assassination attempts. Elizabeth offers Mary encouragement from a common experience. Paul presents Philemon (at least in the form of a letter that appeals to their previous relationship) guidance in a significant decision.

Given the nature of this ministry transformation project, the focus here shall be on Scripture-informed and guided mentoring relationships that are specifically for the purpose of equipping for ministry leadership.

**Jethro and Moses**.  The description of this mentoring relationship is essentially limited to one pericope in Exodus but is significant for its role in addressing matters of ministry leadership. Though Moses and Jethro have had an ongoing, family relationship for quite some time, this example is not one that features an ongoing relationship of direction and learning but does involve a specific instance of directive advice. In fact, Jethro specifically says in the account, "… I will give you counsel…" (Exod. 18.19a).

**Moses and Joshua**.  The relationship and eventual leadership transition between Moses and Joshua provides a more complete description of the classical mentoring relationship. Joshua worked very closely with Moses over a significant period. At several points, Joshua is described as aide or assistant to Moses (Exod. 24.13, 33.11, Num. 11.28, Deut. 1.38, Josh. 1.1). The citation in Numbers suggests the possibility that this could have been from a very young age. Budd describes this as a *hapax legomenon* that in some traditions was understood to mean "from his youth" (which the NIV follows). Other traditions have viewed it as meaning "one of his chosen men" (which the NRSV follows, though with a textual note indicating the presence of the other rendering). Regardless of

the precise length of the relationship, the reference to Joshua as an assistant suggests a close, ongoing working relationship.

Joshua was present at the side of Moses much of the time. The word translated "assistant" in Deuteronomy 1.38 literally means "the one standing before you" (Christensen 32). Given such proximity, Joshua was able to observe much of what Moses did in leading the people. For example, when Moses set out to go up on the mountain to meet with God, he takes Joshua along part of the way toward the summit (Exod. 24.13). When Moses descends the mountain and is approaching the camp to the sounds of revelry, Joshua is with him and errantly believes the noise potentially indicates war (Exod. 32:15-18). In this case, Moses clarifies what is actually taking place. Likewise in the description of Moses' intimate meetings with God – "face to face, as one speaks with a friend" – Joshua is described as not leaving the tent even after Moses had (Exod. 33.11). Presumably no one else had the privilege of observing such wondrous communion between leader and Lord. When a somewhat exasperated Joshua called on Moses to do something about what seemed to be prophesying run amok in the camp, Moses rebuked, or at least corrected, his assistant's apparently misguided exhortation (Num. 11.24-30).

Ultimately, the Pentateuchal narrative reveals that God's intention is for Joshua to succeed Moses in role as leader of the people of Israel. As the text anticipates the ultimate transition, Moses is described as requesting of God the selection of a successor and is instructed by Yahweh to designate Joshua as such by having him stand before the people, to lay hands on him, and commission him by giving him some (or a portion) of his authority. Both Brueggemann (385) and Wenham (123) note that this event signifies

both discontinuity and continuity between Moses and Joshua. Joshua will not hear from God in the same way Moses did in the tent. He will use the Urim for decision-making. The laying on of hands demonstrates continuity of authority from one to the other.

**Barnabas, Paul, Timothy/Titus**.  The New Testament provides an account of three generations of mentoring in the unfolding early Christian mission initially seen in the relationship between Barnabas and Saul, and then multiplied in the relationships between Paul and his proteges in ministry: Timothy and Titus.

Barnabas is introduced early in the book of Acts as one who showed generosity and stewardship by selling a field and leaving the proceeds as an offering "at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4.36-37). He is specifically identified not only by family name but also by the name which the apostles had given to him, a name that the text specifically identifies as meaning "son of encouragement" (Acts 4.36). The Greek here translated "encouragement" (παράκλησις) comes from roots meaning "alongside" and "to call," which nicely express an image of the mentor who comes alongside someone else to help, to counsel, to encourage, and to serve as an advocate. Louw and Nida note that the word carries the idea of a sense of earnestness and can have an especially strong expression (appeal earnestly, beg) (407). Some (e.g., Larkin and Schnabel) have seen the potential translation of "son of exhortation" given other Lukan usage of παράκλησις as having to do with inspired prophetic speech and preaching. While there is no doubt that Barnabas' role throughout the mission described in Acts included this element, the focus of the specific descriptions of *his* work seems more directly focused on the context of interpersonal relationships that involved mentoring (i.e., with Saul/Paul and with John Mark).

When Saul returns to Jerusalem following three years in Arabia after his famous "Damascus Road" conversion (Gal. 1.17), the believers are understandably concerned and suspicious (Acts 9.26). They find it hard to believe that this man who had been such a violent persecutor of the Church is now seeking to join them in the mission. Barnabas is the one who comes alongside Saul to bring him to the apostles and speak on his behalf. In doing so, Barnabas serves as a witness to the validity of Saul's encounter with the risen Christ and the boldness with which Saul has been speaking of Jesus (Acts 9.26-27). In doing this, Barnabas is not only reassuring fearful believers and their leaders but is carrying out some of the very functions that mentors serve. He is cultivating connections with other leaders (networking) and serving as a sponsor for a younger or less experienced leader, providing credibility and support that otherwise would have been absent. Likewise, Barnabas seems willing to look beyond Saul's past and envision a very different future. This practice of recognizing potential and seeing a future for a mentee suggests yet another mark of an effective mentor. In Saul's case, this practice is an especially significant factor. The mentor believes and envisions when those around perceive quite the opposite!

Later Barnabas would be sent from Jerusalem to assume an influential role of leadership in the developing multi-ethnic, mission-oriented church in Antioch (Acts 11.22). He is described in this section of the text as being faithful to the Lord, good, full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11.23-24). Given the significant growth the church was experiencing, Barnabas is described as traveling to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him to Antioch to serve alongside him in the ministry there which they did *together* for one year (Acts 11.26). Presumably, in this context of "working alongside," Saul had an

opportunity to observe the model that Barnabas provided and engage in conversation about the work and activities that are regularly a part of mentoring relationships.

## Theological Foundations

The concept of mentoring as a developmental relationship is rooted theologically in the doctrine of the Trinity. Classic expressions of trinitarianism describe God as one in substance but as existing in three distinct persons or hypostases (Erickson 361; Migliore 72-73; Oden 215-17; Olson and Hall 2-3). For several centuries, Western theologians tended to follow an Augustinian emphasis on the oneness or unity of the trinitarian God. More recently, Western theologians are expressing a greater appreciation for the diversity of the three persons of the trinity who are in constant and intimate communion with one another (Gunton 9-11; Olson and Hall 113-14). This emphasis on the hypostases of the Trinity leads to a more relational understanding of the nature of God, a communion within the Godhead. As John Zizioulas said: "The being of God is a relational being: without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God…. The substance of God, 'God,' has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion" (17). Additionally, Beth Felker Jones said, "When we recognize that God is Trinity, we see that being in relationship is inseparable from what it means to be God" (69). Grenz concurs and emphasizes that in this sense one can accurately say, as does John in his first epistle, "God is love" (72).

Such an emphasis has significant implications for an understanding of both anthropology and ministry because Scripture describes human beings as created *in the image of God*. Genesis 1.26 provides the reader a glimpse of the trinitarian conversation that introduces this idea: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image,

according to our likeness…'" Then Genesis 1.27 confirms this action: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them…" Drawing on both a mindfulness of humans as created in the *imago dei* and on trinitarian theology, particularly that which focuses on the relatedness of the persons of the Godhead, Colin Gunton maintains that "to be a person is to be made in the image of God: that is the heart of the matter. If God is a communion of persons inseparably related, then surely Barth is thus far correct in saying that it is in our relatedness to others that our being human consists" (113). That is to say that humans are relational creatures precisely because humans are created in the image of a God who is characterized by relationship, or what Pinnock calls a "loving relationality" (23).

This connection between Trinity and relationship has important implications for one's understanding of ministry (Seamands 33-35). Mentoring in the formation of newly ordained or commissioned pastors is a specific kind of relationship that flows from our created nature as relational beings who are, in Williams' words, "created and re-created through Christ in the image of the triune God, who is an internal and external relation of persons" (161). Similarly, Wright anchors a conception of mentoring in the idea that human beings are created in the image of the triune God for relationship and are deeply impacted by relationship (*Mentoring* 18). Mentoring is a human relationship modeled on the divine loving relationships seen among persons of the trinity.

### Mentoring—Social Science Origins and Roots

Though the concept is older, many authors dutifully describe the roots of the word *mentor* in Homer's epic work (Anderson and Reese 35; Blodgett 42; Daloz 20; Engstrom

3; Simon 11). While off fighting in the Trojan War, Odysseus entrusts his son

Telemachus to the care and teaching of the character Mentor.

Contemporary theory and research on mentoring found its early expression in the

work of developmental psychologist Daniel Levinson and his associates at Yale

University. Their seminal, *The Seasons of a Man's Life,* anchored the role of mentor

specifically in what they termed the "novice phase" of early adulthood, particularly

focused on vocational beginnings. Levinson et al. described the fourfold functions of a

mentor. A mentor served as a sponsor, using one's vocational capital to facilitate the

early efforts and progression of the mentoree. Second, a mentor served as a "host" or

"guide" on the journey, teaching and directing the mentee especially regarding values and

tasks associated with job responsibilities and work culture. Third, a mentor served as

"exemplar" or model, someone whom the mentoree could aspire to imitate.

Of those standard acknowledged functions of a mentor, Levinson et al.

highlighted an additional function that did not fit as easily in the more occupationally

focused, pragmatic expectations, one that they described as "the most crucial one (98).

The mentor was "to support and facilitate the *realization of the Dream*" (98, emphasis

and capitalization theirs). This function was a way of acknowledging the importance of

the mentor seeing the potential in the mentee, of "believing in him, sharing the youthful

Dream, and giving it his blessing" (99). This function was a way of identifying potential

that perhaps a mentee could not yet see and of affirming and encouraging the mentee in

developing into that potential.

Additionally, this early work addressed the specific nature of the relationship

between mentor and mentee, describing the relationship as a hybrid of both parent and

peer. The mentor serves a parent-like role as one who is advanced in years and vocational

life, but the ultimate goal of this relationship is a more mutually beneficial one, which

these authors wisely note can only happen if a peer-like characteristic to relational quality

exists (Levinson et al. 98). This relationship ultimately involves a deep level of intimacy

and is best understood as a "love relationship" (100). Because of this, intriguingly,

Levinson et al. are rather pessimistic regarding the eventual termination of that

relationship, seeing the relationship as most frequently ending in conflict and frustration

by both members (100-01).

Levinson's work clarifying the function and nature of mentoring as a relational

practice has in many respects set the frame of reference and categories for much of what

has followed in both spiritual and business mentoring literature.

## Spiritual and Ministry Leadership Mentoring

Building from the Scriptural examples noted above, intentional mentoring of

persons for the spiritual life has a long heritage in the Christian church with insights

coming from wise notables extending from the patristics to the contemporary, figures like

Gregory of Nanzianus, Augustine, Julian of Norwich, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila

and John of the Cross, all of whom provide wisdom for the writing of Williams and

Anderson and Reese. The tradition of spiritual direction views relationship as the primary

vehicle for directed learning and as cultivating personal transformation that is unique to

the person receiving direction and a cooperative work with the Holy Spirit. Edward

Sellner builds on the work of Levinson et al., joining the roles of the mentor to Erik

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development and the theological foundations of a

caring, loving relationship that people share with God (26, 30-31). Sellner argues that in

addition to intimacy, a person in the young adult stage also needs encouragement and guidance with regard to vocationally related matters from someone in a loving, trusted relationship. Stanley and Clinton conceive of the ultimate outcome in such a developmental relationship as empowerment of the mentee. Their formal definition of mentoring emphasizes that mentoring is "a relational process in which a mentor, who knows or has experienced something, transfers that something (resources of wisdom, information, experience, confidence, insight, relationships, status, etc.) to a mentoree, at an appropriate time and manner, so that it facilitates development or empowerment" (40).

Stanley and Clinton's research provided a taxonomy of eight mentoring relationships categorized according to level of relational involvement (intensive, occasional, or passive), the nature of personal interaction (face-to-face or distance), the level of intentionality applied, and the learning and/or developmental purpose for the mentoring (41-42). In some cases, a mentoring relationship may fall exclusively into one of the categories they describe, but in many cases multiple functions may be served by the same mentor and mentoring relationship. In a couple of cases, the degree to which the case truly involves mentoring is highly questionable. The "historical" type which they describe is limited to seeing a figure who has lived in the past as an exemplar for emulation. To be sure, one can certainly learn from historical figures who lived in the past, but in such cases no relationship exists. If mentoring is a relational process, one wonders how this constitutes truly a type of mentoring.

Additionally, Stanley and Clinton describe the possibility of mentoring relationships that differ from the more traditional, such as one more experienced person investing in one more inexperienced person. Adopting the same language that business

mentoring literature of the time was utilizing, they describe a "constellation" of relationships—one of which involves a person more experienced or in a greater position of power (which they describe as vertically above) and other relationships of a peer nature (horizontal in experience and power) (162).

Especially applicable to this study is the more specific nature of mentoring as a leadership development process, particularly for those in ministry and mission. Published work in this area tends to be drawn anecdotally from the experience of gifted and effective leaders. Figures like Bobb Biehl, Ted Engstrom, and Walter Wright all draw on their experiences both of being mentored and of mentoring others to highlight key practices they have found to be effective.

Because ministry mentoring actively embraces an organic, divinely ordained relationship as a context for learning, growth, and multi-dimensional development, the relationship is by nature dynamic rather than static in nature. This nature is to some degree implicit in the descriptions of mentoring practice that Anderson and Reese provide. Early in their description is the concept of "beginning well," a phase of the relationship they describe as "initiating and establishing the relationship for mentoring" (61). Even the use of "phase" terminology suggests progression, change, and development over time. They go on to describe the further unfolding of this work with attention to the development of that relationship. Drawing on the writing and thought of twelfth century spiritual director Aelred of Rievaulx, they describe the cultivation of a progressively more intimate relationship between mentor and mentee through stages (Aelred's term) of spiritual friendship: selection, probation, admission, and harmony (82-84).

Carson Pue's body of work is focused on this concept of progression and change. As a part of a more comprehensive leadership development strategy, his *mentoring matrix* also adopts "phase" terminology, beginning with a phase of awareness, identifying one's mix of talents and abilities as well as what he calls one's "shadow side." His second phase ("freeing up") includes awareness of needs and struggles, the things that are, in Pue's words, "holding us back." Phase three, labeled visioneering, involves discovery of personal and organizational purpose and, as might be expected, involves the development of a vision for the church they lead. The fourth phase, implementing, features the elements which help to bring that vision to reality, practices like vision casting, mobilization of team members, consideration of budget/financial resources, and establishing measures of accountability and progress. The final phase is sustaining and is focused on maintain forward momentum on bringing making the vision reality (Pue 19-23; Pue et al. 25-29). This reality is particularly important given that certain practices may be more important to a mentoring experience in one phase than in another phase. Best practices may not be best practices *at all times*, but for *certain points* in a progressively developing educational relationship.

**Practices which cultivate relationship**.

Because mentoring occurs in the context of relationship by its very definition, some practices described in the literature are focused especially on establishing, cultivating, and strengthening that relational context. The quality of the relationship has a significant influence on the content of learning and the effectiveness of that learning process.

Drawing on historic practices of spiritual formation and mentoring, writers like Anderson and Reese note the progressive nature of this relationship moves gradually through phrases or stages characterized especially by the levels of trust and commitment experienced by both parties. These relationships begin with interest and a willingness to explore, transition into increasing levels of trust and transparency, reach a phase that allows for both mutual sharing and difficult experiences of correction, and then end with either a separation of relationship or a transformation to a friendship marked by greater mutuality.

Particularly important in the initial phase of relationship is the matching of a mentee and mentor who find a rich relational chemistry (Anderson and Reese 61-63). Elmore describes this stage with the phrase "Come and See" and notes that the interactions at this point are marked by attraction and curiosity (*Mentoring* 74). For a mentee, finding a mentor who is honest, transparent, and able to teach and model what they know while also believing in the mentee's potential are especially critical (Biehl 100-02). For a mentor, finding a mentee who is teachable and self-motivated would be important (Biehl 122-24, Elmore *Mentoring* 60). While availability and willingness are important in this beginning phrase, looking beyond these more general traits to the specifics of matching interests and needs and even of inviting input from friends, family, and colleagues help to make this relationship especially effective (Williams 282).

After a season of exploration, lasting mentoring relationships move into a second phase of testing and deepening. During this stage, both parties test commitment and faithfulness, gaining insight into one another's motives, establishing an assurance of confidentiality while developing a commitment to endurance that they will both remain

committed to the relationship through the difficult and trying moments yet to come

(Anderson and Reese 78). This phase is fundamentally about establishing trust, and,

while that testing of trust may come from both parties, often the initiative, testing, and

establishing will most effectively come from the mentor who models the vulnerability

that the relationship will ultimately need (Anderson and Reese 87). This comfort with

confidentiality in the relationship will be crucial for effectiveness (E. Johnson 39;

Williams 281; Wright *Mentoring* 46).

Eventually, the relationship moves to a third stage characterized by much greater

levels of intimacy and by progressively more vulnerable disclosure and interaction. This

level of transparency enables mentors to help mentees learn by seeing not only their

successes and strengths, but also their failures and weaknesses (Biehl 101; Engstrom 105;

Engstrom and Jenson 104-05; Wright *Mentoring* 66). In addition, the level of trust and

intimacy in this phase of friendship creates the capacity for the relationship to bear the

more difficult practices like confrontation and correction that, while painful, also may

produce the greatest fruitfulness of personal growth and vocational development.

Blodgett, for example, in describing what she calls "transformative mentoring,"

emphasizes that the most effective mentoring "does not just inspire and motivate you but

also tests you" (55). Questioning assumptions, challenging frames of reference, and

exhorting for change all require a depth of relationship that will bear the weight of such

expressions of "tough love" (55).

The literature shows a significant variance in the nature of mentoring

relationships beyond this third stage. Some see an ongoing relationship marked by

harmony (Anderson and Reese 84), "mutual gladness" (Williams 145), and deep

intimacy. Sellner captures such a quality of relationship powerfully in his use of the term "soul friend" to describe the ongoing and enduring relationship (151). At this level of relationship, a much greater sense of mutuality and delight seem to hold sway. Others, however, see an end to the relationship. Research by Levinson et al. had shown that many such relationships even ended "with strong conflict and bad feelings on both sides" (100). A more positive end, however, may come with intentionality, with the focus shifting now to how the mentor might bless the mentee by celebrating ways that the mentee has developed, has been empowered, and how the mentee might shift her or his attention to mentoring others (Elmore *Mentoring* 93).

Often much of the attention in mentoring is paid to the passing on of vocational skills and experience, while less focus is given to the cultivation of the relationship, the *context* in which that personal and vocational development takes place. Elaine Heath sees this attentiveness to the cultivation of deep friendship as especially helpful in long-term, deep mentoring experiences, describing it as one of the three most important mentoring practices she learned from her mentor (25). Wright's paradigm for leadership describes both values and relationships as being "the most significant influence of leadership" (*Relational Leadership* 34-35). Greater attention to practices which are effective in this area has the potential to enhance the mentoring of those starting out in ministry.

**Practices which influence personal [spiritual] development**.

Since mentoring involves relationship, mentoring is a friendship that is directed toward fostering learning and personal growth (Wright *Mentoring* 58). Fundamentally in the Christian mentoring literature, however, the *telos* toward which all of this moves is the "formation of our hearts in the image of Christ" or spiritual maturity (Williams 71).

For this reason, much of the Christian mentoring literature draws heavily on the historical tradition of spiritual direction.

Given such origins, three practices in particular stand out. The first of these is listening. This posture of listening helps to ensure that genuine understanding happens between mentor and mentee, that efforts at superficial quick fixes are avoided (Engstrom and Jenson 90), and that the engagement helps to cultivate growth in the mentee, not merely information transfer from the mentor. In fact, Wright addresses this posture even more strongly, arguing that the role of a mentor is not to be an answer-person, but rather to listen and ask insightful questions that enable learning on the part of the mentee (*Mentoring* 68). Only intentional, active listening makes this possible and probable.

Such active listening has at least two significant purposes in a mentoring relationship with a developing pastor. One, "expectant listening," as Williams calls it (122), paired with thought-provoking questions enables the interaction between mentor and mentee to truly foster the mentee's development in thinking rather than simply providing easy or superficial answers. Second, expectant listening enables the mentoring pair to contextualize the experience for maximum benefit to the mentee. Newton argues this practice allows one to customize the mentoring experience to the needs of the mentee (188), but, even beyond that, such customization can extend also to the dreams, aspirations, personality, and ministry context of that mentee.

In this context of spiritual formation, however, the concept of listening also takes on a richer and deeper connotation since spiritual development (either in pastoral formation specifically or more generally regarding Christian maturity) necessarily involves the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit. Leighton Ford recognizes the roots of

such a practice in the tradition of spiritual direction and describes this as "holy listening,"

an activity that mentor and mentee engage in together, helping "people to pay attention to

what God is doing in their lives" (70). Such listening may involve attentiveness to the

ways a mentee talks about the experience of the Holy Spirit's activity in his or her life.

Such activity may be something both mentor and mentee do in listening for what the

Holy Spirit is saying. Anderson and Reese describe a similar dynamic of helping direct a

mentee to the Holy Spirit's work in the mentee's life (44-45). Williams draws the titular

metaphor for his book on mentoring for pastoral formation from this notion of the mentor

as a tool used by the potter (the Holy Spirit, or, drawing from the writing of Irenaeus, the

Holy Spirit and Christ as the two hands of the potter) to give shape to the life and work of

the new pastor (99). Listening serves as a posture of heart for both mentor and mentee in

relation to the Spirit's work in and through this relationship. While measuring the

guidance and activity of the Holy Spirit is difficult, this study may find listening for the

experiences of that divine work and the practice of "holy listening" by new pastors and

mentees fruitful.

Accountability is a second practice in mentoring for spiritual formation that is

often highlighted. Awareness by a mentee of being held accountable for behavior,

responses, or goals increases the likelihood that the mentee will follow through

(Anderson and Reese 128; Elmore *Mentoring* 81; Engstrom 33; Stanley and Clinton 199).

In fact, Gonlag highlights the way Wesley's class meetings combined a caring

relationship with expectations of accountability that fostered substantial spiritual growth

(212). Such accountability may be as simple as a mentor asking a mentee a series of

questions with the expectation the mentee will respond honestly and transparently

(Elmore *Mentoring* 81). Stanley and Clinton recommend coming to a formal, mutual agreement about accountability at the initiation of the relationship and argue that the more "self-initiative" that a mentee shows on this practice, the more effective the experience will be (199). In other cases, a more informal approach to accountability anchored in the context of a covenant to which both parties agree is encouraged (Pohly 141-42; Williams 268-69).

A third practice that has substantial support in the literature is encouragement. A key role that a mentor plays is to provide support and praise clearly and consistently for the mentee. Often this support is provided by words of affirmation and praise for the mentee either as a person or for their accomplishment (Anderson and Reese 48; Biehl 131-32; Elmore *Mentoring* 81; Newton 76). Engstrom and Jenson (who devote an entire chapter to this practice) break out components of encouragement to include offering compliments, expressing confidence, and comforting the mentee in difficult seasons (15-18). They even suggest that so influential are words of encouragement that silence can serve as a discouragement to a mentee (14).  In addition to encouragement about the present, this mentoring practice includes having the capacity to recognize a mentee's potential and to envision a positive and fulfilling future for the mentee (Biehl 102; Engstrom 106-07, Engstrom and Jenson 11; Wright *Mentoring* 29), and not just "to think it" (Engstrom 107) but *to give voice to it* in the presence of the mentee.

With the exception of Williams above, these practices in the popular Christian mentoring literature typically describe "spiritual mentoring" more generally and are not necessarily specific to the ministerial vocational context. Certainly, spiritual and personal development are critical to the transition of new pastors shifting from academic life to

vocational life but need exists for research directed specifically to the vocational ministry context. In addition, the approaches described here are anecdotal, often based on an author's <u>personal</u> experience of being mentored or of mentoring others rather than on systematic research. In other cases, some programs and initiatives have been created by denominational judicatories, but the degree to which these have been established based on research into mentoring practices *specific to the ministry context* is unclear. Black's work on the utilization of practices from the field of the psychology of human personnel in helping pastors integrate theory and practice is one example of the fruitfulness of this avenue of research and suggests more would be helpful. Mentoring of new pastors in those early years of full-time ministry could greatly benefit from research that discerns the importance of and the manner in which these practices are utilized and experienced in that context.

**Practices which shape Professional Development**

This research project is focused on both a specific vocational context and season of life—full time pastoral ministry and the transition to that context by those graduating from college. Among the contributions of the literature are both the issues faced in such a context and mentoring practices which have special application to that context.

Many definitions of mentoring include an educational component as mentoring utilizes a relational context in order to facilitate *learning* (*e.g.*, Anderson and Reese 17; Elmore *Mentoring* 24; Engstrom 25; Gonlag 209-10; Stanley and Clinton 40). Since teaching and learning are important functions of the mentoring relationship, the mentee's willingness to learn is essential. Elmore and Biehl both suggest teachability as a key criterion for selection of a mentee (Elmore 60; Biehl 124). Anderson and Reese describe

teachability as a necessary "prelude to growth" and operationalize it in terms of the willingness of a mentee to listen without becoming defensive and having a heart open to change, ultimately seeing teachability as a submissiveness to the word of the Holy Spirit through the mentor (102-03). Given the mutuality of the mentoring relationship, some writers also note that the mentor likewise must be willing to learn from the mentee and from the interactions they share (Anderson and Reese 51; Biehl 103).

Among other things, a mentor is a teacher, sharing from their experience and expertise in the context of relationship. This teaching can include the provision of perspective, wisdom, and knowledge (Wright *Mentoring* 44, 50). In the context of pastoral mentoring, mentoring can include teaching of specific ministry or pastoral skills, including pastoral care, preaching/communication, teamwork, leadership, worship, planning, officiating weddings and funerals, and many others (Blodgett 48-51, 56-58; Gonlag 212; Williams 143, 179-80). Whether involving ministry skills or identity/character formation, the goal is not merely to pass along information but to foster learning such that the new pastor is experiencing transformation and development, something Williams describes as the "maieutic" role of the mentor, "in-*forming*" the heart and mind (Williams 134-36).

A particular dynamic of the teaching function stands out. Stated somewhat simplistically, the transition from academic life to vocational pastoral ministry is marked by a profound but essential shift in thinking, moving from concept to appropriation. C. David Jones, whose focus is on theological field education, characterizes mentoring as "the catalyst of theory and practice," arguing that function of mentoring is "to facilitate

the integration of relevant theory, substantive knowledge, functional skills, and self-understanding" (84). Williams describes pastoral mentoring in this transition in this way:

> This is the overlap of their *being* and their *thinking* under the indigenous pressures, responsibilities, and tasks of *doing* pastoral ministry – when they intentionally participate in the ongoing formation, preparation and education of fellow pastors at uniquely critical moments in their lives, when they are learning how to do and to be and to think, drawing patterns and forming habits that they will carry with them into every church or place of ministry in which they serve (55).

Ray Anderson describes this same evolution in his own experience as discovering that he was making the transition from the *study* of theology to the *doing* of theology (33) or making a transition "from a theology of ministry to a ministry of theology" (27). A few novices are potentially able to make this shift easily or perhaps without extensive struggles, but most are greatly aided by a mentor who has walked through that transition and are regularly engaged in the *practice* of theology. As a point of emphasis, Williams calls these first few years of ministry "critical" because they, in a manner of speaking, set the DNA that will shape that pastor's ministry for the long term (56).

Mentoring makes an especially important contribution to this dynamic, for mentoring typically occurs during a time in which the mentee is embedded in a specific ministry context and is learning by doing, whether the mentoring occurs as a part of limited-term internship or an ongoing place of fulltime ministry. The mentee has an opportunity to do more than merely listen to what a mentor *says* about something but can actually try it. Mentee's have a setting in which they can "participate in a wide-range of

ministries in the life of the church" (Williams 60). This integration of "classroom theory" with the "actual practice of ministry" can be cultivated more effectively with the guidance of a mentor precisely because the student is acquiring knowledge by associative learning, the process of doing repetitively and consistently over time (C. David Jones 74, 79-80).

Besides helping a mentee make a transition in thinking from concept to appropriation, a mentor also assists in a process of thinking *about* that practical experience. A mentor places crucial role in creating the space for and guiding the process by which that can happen (Williams 61; Wright *Mentoring* 42). In fact, Williams argues that this space for thoughtful reflection and pedagogical discussion is essential for learning: "Experience alone does not teach us much. It only teaches if it is followed by reflection and deliberation…" (61). This concept is supported by adult learning theory as described later in this chapter. Though advice and counsel that a mentor gives can be valuable to a mentee, learning is often enhanced by the questions a mentor asks that require the mentee to think in a new way about what they have experienced.

The questions of a mentor serve as a voice from outside that immediate context of ministry and also external to one's own thinking. A wise and effective mentor can raise questions that challenge a mentee's assumptions and frames of reference in ways that they could not see on their own (Blodgett 59; E. Johnson 41). Such questions can constructively critique a mentee's ideas (Wright *Mentoring* 45), eliciting new avenues for thought or identifying new directions for action that had not been previously identified (Blodgett 58, 60).

In addition to the learning that comes by reflection and conversation, modeling also serves as an influential function of the mentoring relationship. Much about ministry is absorbed in presence rather than stated and heard. Mindful that mentees often learn skills through an expert and seasoned exemplar, William Willimon notes that one "learns a craft not by reading books, but by looking over the shoulder of a master, watching the moves, learning by example…" (285). Yet the same also seems true regarding that deep-seated heart behind the application of skill. Anderson, for example, writes that "the '*soul* of ministry' is caught as much as it is taught" (38, italics mine). Modeling consistently factors in lists of functions of mentoring or is a factor to consider in selecting a mentor (Biehl 100-01; Engstrom 104; Elmore *Mentoring* 98; Gonlag 212; Heath 25; Newton 79; Stanley and Clinton 40). Wright notes that the referential power that is exercised in such a function is especially influential in shaping behavior, often in lasting ways (*Relational Leadership* 50).

Williams argues for the importance that this modeling function plays in pastoral formation both in terms of personal development (character, spiritual growth, recreation, family, etc.) and vocational development (ministry skills and practices) (141-42). Regarding practical theology, he sees a pastoral mentor's example as helping mentees learn pastoral care, preaching/teaching, planning, leadership, conflict resolution, and social justice/mercy ministry (143-44). These areas of ministry praxis are certainly important but missing from the literature is the research to establish specific aspects of vocation that are most meaningfully learned through the influence of modeling and perhaps also an in-depth description of the ways in which that example is most meaningfully experienced. This project can help to provide this vital identification.

Finally, mentors also serve a sponsoring function for their mentees. Gonlag describes the help a mentor provides in terms of protection as well promotion within a ministry organization or broader association (213). Particularly important within this function is the sharing of the mentor's relational network which serves both to promote the mentee but also to connect that mentee with a variety of new relationships with people of experience and expertise who may serve as resources in the future (Biehl 79; E. Johnson 39; Stanley and Clinton 119). Biehl describes the influence that a mentor can have by "introducing you to my friends as my friend" (79). Works by Elmore and by Stanley and Clinton describe this role not so much as a function of mentoring but rather as a particular type of mentoring though both acknowledge that any given mentor could provide several of the types of mentoring (Elmore *Mentoring* 98; Stanley and Clinton 117). While other functions of mentoring are focused on the development of mentees themselves, this function is more focused on the development of the mentee's influence (Stanley and Clinton 124).

The literature for spiritual and ministry leadership mentoring draws on a rich heritage of practices for spiritual direction and historic pastoral formation. Often the insights that are shared are drawn from an effective and influential mentor's anecdotal personal experience. This practice is undoubtedly helpful but could be clarified and informed by a more systematic exploration of best practices specifically within the context of pastoral ministry in a contemporary context.

### Workplace/Business Mentoring

The business realm has seen a proliferation of research on the practice of mentoring since the developmental work of Levinson et al. was first explored in the

context of the business workplace. Ragins and Kram call this increase "a literal explosion

of research" (4). Nearly every review of workplace mentoring theory and research traces

the roots of primary themes and concepts back to Kathy Kram's seminal research initially

reported in her 1983 article (Kram *Phases of the Mentor Relationship*) and later

developed with much greater detail with the publication of her book, *Mentoring at Work:*

*Developmental Relationships in Organization Life* (see e.g., Bozeman and Feeney 721;

Dougherty et al. 140), though Kram's work is not the only or earliest work. Merriam

describes work being done across domains like adult development, business, and

education (162-169).

**Mentoring Functions**

Within the workplace context a great deal of work has focused on mentoring

*functions*. Drawing on Kram's discoveries, scholars generally view these as falling into

two primary categories: career and psychosocial (Kram *Mentoring at Work* 23). In this

schema, career functions include anything that fosters "career advancement" for the

mentee. These functions include sponsoring, protecting, providing exposure or visibility,

and giving assignments that challenge a mentee and contribute to greater growth and

development (Kram *Mentoring at Work* 23; McDowall-Long 521; Ragins and Cotton

530; Wanberg et al. 42). These career functions are made possible largely through the

position and influence that the mentor holds within the organization (Kram *Mentoring at*

*Work* 23). Psychosocial functions address matters of personal development that enhance a

mentee's competence, identity, and general effectiveness (23). Behaviors or practices that

fall within this function can include friendship, counseling, acceptance/affirmation, social

activities, and role modeling (Kram *Mentoring at Work* 23; McDowall-Long 522;

Wanberg et al. 42-43). Psychosocial functions are produced largely through the personal relationship shared between mentor and mentee, a relationship Kram says "fosters mutual trust and increasing intimacy," elements that literature from spiritual and ministry mentoring also emphasized (*Mentoring at Work* 23). Subsequent research demonstrated support for these two functions (Noe 472).

At several points researchers identified other functions to complement career and psychosocial. Some studies have indicated that role modeling may not be simply a practice *within* the psychosocial function but may indeed serve rightly as a third function of mentoring (Dougherty et al. 142; Ensher and Murphy *Power Mentoring* 29; W. Johnson "A Framework…," 140; Lane 13; Ragins and Kram 9; Scandura 170; St-Jean 209-10; Wanberg et al. 41). While acknowledging Kram's two primary functions, Lane suggests a "teaching help" function as a possible third (3). In later writing, drawing on positive organizational scholarship (POS), Ragins advocates for relational functions as a third category (Ragins 527; Yip and Kram 89). She identifies six subcategories that provide further definition of such a function: personal learning and growth, inspiration, affirmation of ideal, best and authentic selves, reliance on communal norms, shared influence and mutual respect, and relational trust and commitment (Ragins 527-32). Within the field, significant consensus about the career and psychosocial functions exists with divergence about any additional functions. Further research will be needed to confirm any such functions, but several subcategories of Ragins' work on relational mentoring are substantially related to spiritual mentoring practices and benefits described from anecdotal experience. Present here is some suggestion of convergence between research in business/organizational mentoring and the experience of many in ministry.

Research has suggested that some additional variables moderate these mentoring functions. Interestingly, Chao et al. found that mentees in mentoring relationships that were not formally established or assigned by the organization received more career support from their mentor (630). Mullen, who was especially interested in identifying what types of mentors can provide the greatest level of both career and psychosocial functions, discovered that a mentee was less likely to receive both mentoring functions from the same mentor when that was assigned by the organization (328). In fact, the only significant predictor she found for a mentor providing significant levels of both mentoring functions was the initiation of the relationship by the mentor (328).

Such theory and research regarding mentoring functions may help inform the mentoring of new pastors though the goals and means of measurement of such functions could be different. For example, new pastors may benefit from the credibility and protection that a more experienced pastor could provide. The goal toward which such career functions often move in the workplace mentoring literature is advancement (typically measured by promotion and increases in salary) within the organization or field. In some cases, new pastors may anticipate eventually serving in larger churches or leadership positions that involve oversight of other pastors (e.g., a district or regional superintendent), but this assumption would not often be the formally stated goal in many cases. In their mentor role instrument (MRI), for example, Ragins and McFarlin measured the sponsorship element of career function by asking if a mentor "uses his/her influence to support my advancement in the organization" and measured the exposure element by asking if a mentor "creates opportunities for me to impress important people in the organization" (328). While such dynamics may have some referent in the context

of pastoral ministry, few new pastors would see their purpose as "advancement in the organization" (promotion) and "impressing people" (though they may hope that some recognize their competence or skill). Increased exposure within a denomination or network of churches could provide additional opportunities for ministry (e.g., preaching at camps, presenting at conferences, serving on judicatory committees, etc.). In fact, Burke found a wide variety of things that mentees learn in such a relationship, concluding that "it appeared that proteges learned a wide range of *different* things, perhaps depending on their unique circumstances and needs" (360, emphasis his). Opportunity exists here to explore the experience of new pastor mentees to discover the significance of career functions of mentoring and, more specifically, how such career functions are experienced in this unique context.

**Mentoring Phases**

In addition to the functions that mentoring serves, researchers also have discovered that a mentoring relationship moves through discernible *phases* and even that the prevalence of mentoring functions varies by stage. Kram's seminal work in the field established four primary phases of the mentoring relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Kram *Phases of the Mentor Relationship* 614; Kram *Mentoring at Work* 48; Haddock-Millar 158). These stages refer to dynamics of the developmental relationship and differ from those of Carson and Pue described earlier which are more focused on the content emphasis or those of Anderson and Reese, also described earlier, which are more focused specifically on the dynamics of the personal relationship.

According to Kram, the initiation phase lasts for six to twelve months and is largely concerned with developing the personal relationship and the shift from perception of a possible learning relationship (what Kram describes as fantasy) to positive concrete expectations for that mentoring relationship. This phase of the relationship is marked by an awareness of the differences in experience and knowledge between mentor and mentee. The mentee views the mentor with admiration and as someone who can provide encouragement, help, and support. The mentor sees the mentee as someone possessing potential for development, a willingness to learn, and perhaps also as someone from whom they can learn from as well. Significant attention is given to nurturing the relationship and, in time, these aspirations are transformed into what Kram called "concrete positive expectations" (*Mentoring at Work* 52). Research by Chao documented that during this phase, mentees received the lowest levels of mentoring functions compared with all other phases as might be expected if the predominant focus is on cultivating the relationship itself (24).

The second phase, cultivation, is the longest phase and lasts two to five years according to Kram's research (*Mentoring at Work* 53). During this phase, the full range of mentoring functions may be offered with the career functions most prevalent early in the phase and the psychosocial functions gradually being engaged as the relationship deepens. Kram identified two important factors that influence the functions during this phase. The degree of career functions offered was largely dependent on the seniority of the mentor in the organization (both in terms of rank and tenure) and the amount of experience they had in the field. The degree of psychosocial support offered by the mentor was often contingent upon the degree of trust and intimacy in the relationship

consistent with some of the more anecdotal wisdom of many of the writers described

above regarding spiritual mentoring (*Mentoring at Work* 53). Beyond these factors, the

specific experiences of functions and learning are complex and are often shaped by the

individual's needs and expectations. Kram also notes that as the relationship develops

during this phase, a shift occurs in the directionality of that relationship moving from

what she calls a "one-way helping relationship" to one that is marked more by mutuality

(*Mentoring at Work* 53). This phase is the longest, least conflicted, and most fruitful

phase of the mentoring relationship.

The third phase of the mentoring relationship, *separation*, is marked by

significant change and can be inaugurated by a number of factors. Kram describes this

both negatively in terms of loss and positively with a growing confidence and sense of

independence by the mentee. This phase is marked by uncertainty and loss for both

mentor and mentee. The experienced mentor loses the opportunity for influence as well

as the opportunity to learn from the (usually) younger mentee. The mentee loses the

source of career and psychosocial functions that the mentor provided. According to

Kram, the essential work of this phase involves processing the losses involved

(*Mentoring at Work* 57).

Whereas Levinson et al. anticipated that this kind of loss was most often marked

by conflict and bitter, negative feelings (100), Kram's research indicated that though loss

is certainly involved, this phrase of separation can also be marked by an element of

excitement (*Mentoring at Work* 57). The mentee experiences the enthusiasm of greater

autonomy and independence, needing the direct guidance and oversight of the mentor

much less. The mentor finds joy in seeing the fruition of her or his work as the mentee demonstrates this growing confidence and competence.

The experience of mentoring functions changes dramatically in this phase. Structural changes in the mentoring relationship make some career functions impossible to continue. According to Kram, both parties in the relationship face uncertainty over exactly what form the relationship will take in the future. The transitions marked by this phase result in significantly less modeling processes than were seen in the cultivation phase.  The mentee may express behaviors and attitudes like those of the mentor but now without the intentional, deliberate effort to imitate or incorporate the attitudes of the mentor. While challenges exist in working through the enthusiasm and uncertainty of this phase, Kram emphasizes that this phase is "critical to development" (*Mentoring at Work* 60). The mentee moves beyond dependence on the close and immediate support of the mentor, demonstrating competence and wisdom acquired during the earlier phases of the mentoring relationship.

The fourth and final phase in Kram's schema results when the relationship takes on a new form. In the *redefinition* phase, the relationship between mentee and mentor becomes more of a peer friendship marked by greater mutuality and may continue as such indefinitely. While both psychosocial and career functions were less explicit at such a stage, they did continue albeit often more sporadically and usually "from a distance." Kram understood this phase to be marked by very little interpersonal interaction (*Mentoring at Work* 62; *Phases of the Mentoring Relationship* 620). In many cases, mentoring relationships never reach this final stage. In Kram's initial research, only eight

of eighteen mentoring relationships achieved this stage. Later research has suggested that few actually transition to this phase (Haddock-Millar 163).

An alternative model of mentoring phases describes five phases with the first two more focused on establishing the relationship, a middle phase marked by significant progress, and then two final phases of bringing the relationship to a close. Clutterbuck labels the initial phase *rapport building* for during this season the mentor and mentee assess the commonality they find in their values, their levels of mutual respect, and the degree to which their expectations for the mentoring relationship align (Megginson et al. 19; Haddock-Millar 159). The second phase, *setting direction*, focuses on the mutual process of goal setting, bringing together needs, interests, and values with objectives that will address the expectations of both mentor and mentee. These initial stages are in large measure preparatory to the *core* middle phase of *progression*. This stage is marked by less focus on relationship building and more on the process of mutual learning or what Megginson et al. describe as "learning conversations" (22). The final two phases are focused on closing the relationship. The fourth phase, *winding down*, involves a growing awareness of having accomplished mutual goals and evaluating and celebrating the learning that has been achieved. The final phase is *moving on*, the language of which is a bit misleading. In this schema, the formal mentoring relationship is closed, but the anticipation is that this will involve "reformulating the relationship, typically into a friendship" that is ongoing and involves continued mutual sharing on an occasional basis (Megginson et al. 21). Obvious similarities exist between these two perspectives on phases of mentoring. Clutterbuck's approach breaks out the relationship-oriented and direction-oriented elements in those initial phases and uses a more positive

characterization of the "winding down" phase (in contrast to Kram's use of the word "separation") (Clutterbuck et al. 20-21).

An understanding of the phases of the mentoring relationship makes an important contribution to effective mentoring by accounting for the fact that relationships are not static. The skills or practices needed at one phase of such a relationship may indeed be different than at another phase. It may be obvious to both parties that greater attention to trust and rapport building must come earlier in such a relationship while later practices may utilize that trust to bring confrontation about something that needs to be addressed or to change. While mentor and mentee may intuitively sense the need for adjustment in practices in the early stages of such a relationship, the fact that this relationship may change (or even terminate) dramatically over the longer term may not seem as obvious. Awareness of the latter stages of a mentoring relationship may help both mentees and mentors navigate the uncertainty and anxiety that marks these phases. Research suggests that practices like discussing the eventual redefinition of the relationship through the stages and assessing the nature and maturity of the relationship regularly may help a mentoring relationship end or be redefined more constructively (Clutterbuck and Megginson 192; Cranwell-Ward et al. 226-28).

**Multiple Developmental Relationships**

Business mentoring theory and research has also long recognized a whole range of relationships that contribute to development by providing both career and psychosocial functions. Kram's early work described this range as a constellation of relationships that everyone may have throughout his or her life (*Mentoring at Work* 149). Such a group of relationships features not only mentors but also peers (who may each provide different

functions including the provision of information, encouragement, and more), family members, and other work colleagues. Higgins and Thomas label these people "developers" and recognize they may each contribute something to a mentee's development but not necessarily in the same way or to the same degree as a true mentor. Various characteristics of such a constellation affect its functionality and impact on career success and attitudes.  For example, while research on the effects of a constellation of developmental relationships is relatively sparse, later longitudinal research generally showed that the size of that constellation of relationships had a significant impact on short-term attitudes about work (e.g., satisfaction with work), and the quality of the relationships in the constellation had an impact on the long-term career outcome of organizational retention (Higgins and Thomas 241).

Within this broader concept of a constellation of developmental relationships, peer relationships have received special attention. While friendships (whether at work or elsewhere) provide meaningful career and psychosocial functions, research has demonstrated that some functions are unique to the conventional mentoring relationships (Kram and Isabella 117). For example, while workplace friendships can offer information, job-related feedback, and help in strategizing for advancement, the mentoring relationship provides elements of sponsorship, exposure (within the organization), and challenging work assignments from which a mentee might learn. Likewise, in psychosocial functions, a peer relationship can offer support and friendship while a mentor provides counseling and a role model (or example). Three types of peer relationships have been identified as important: the information peer with whom the primary function is the sharing of information, the collegial peer from whom help is

received in strategizing for career advancement and job feedback, and the special peer

whose primary role is support and encouragement (Kram *Mentoring at Work*; Kram and

Isabella).

As researchers observed the rapidly changing career environment and applied a

social network perspective, views on the concept of a constellation of relationships

eventually evolved into an exploration of developmental networks (Kram *A Relational*

*Approach*; Higgins and Kram; Higgins; Scandura and Pellegrini; Yip and Kram). The

consistently swift change in technology places even the older, more experienced person

in a difficult position. The radical change from career development at a single employer

to a highly mobile employee who is likely to work for several different employers (which

Hall and Mirvis describe as a shift from an organization to a "protean" career after the

Greek god Proteus who could change shape at will) (20) makes a single mentor in one

organization a highly limited developmental resource. In such a career environment,

many people benefit from several concurrent developmental relationships. In some cases,

workplaces have even formalized the concept by creating mentoring circles, groups of

senior level leaders and lower-level professionals, for fostering personal learning (Kram

and Hall 115).

Yet not all developmental networks are created equal. Several factors affect the

efficacy of a developmental network including a network's diversity and the strength of

relationships in the network (Yip and Kram 89). The diversity of a network is measured

in part by its range which researchers describe as determined by the amount of different

social systems from which these developers come. Diversity is also measured in part by

the density of the network or the degree to which the people in a network are connected

to one another in some way (Higgins and Kram 269; Yip and Kram 89). In addition, the

helpfulness of a network is also determined by the strength of relationships that a mentee

has with the other members of the network. Drawing on social network research, Higgins

and Kram emphasize reciprocity, mutuality, and interdependence as especially indicative

of greater relationship strength (269). These variables interact to provide a variety of

different effects for the mentee. Developmental networks with high levels of diversity

and low levels of relationship strength tend to have an impact on the likelihood of a

mentee to change organizations or careers while developmental networks with low levels

of diversity and high levels of relationship strength tend to have a stronger effect on

fostering organizational commitment and a sense of satisfaction with work (Higgins and

Kram).

The impact of these developmental networks on the mentee's experience varies

and includes elements of both functions of mentoring relationships. Some research has

suggested that having a network of relationships as opposed to a single mentor may result

in greater benefits—greater job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and

knowledge of additional job opportunities (Baugh and Scandura 514). Additional

research on network structure has identified that these developmental networks have both

an inner core of stronger relationship ties that show strong relational stability over time

and an outer periphery of relationships that are less stable. Research has demonstrated

that the inner core of relationships provided high psychosocial support and low career

support and the outer core a mix of psychosocial and career support (Cummings and

Higgins 51).

The presence of such developmental networks does not occur by mere happenstance but is influenced by the intentionality and behavior of *the mentee*. Higgins et al. have highlighted the role that developmental initiation plays in the construction of a developmental network. They define developmental initiation as "a set of development-seeking behaviors undertaken by a focal individual (mentee) that are intended to enhance his or her skills, knowledge, task performance, and/or personal learning" (Higgins et al. 349, parentheses mine). These behaviors include both information seeking behaviors and help seeking behaviors. Such behaviors can be shaped by antecedents like socioeconomic status, gender, and expatriate identity. The suggestion also exists that the employment of such behaviors could be driven by emotional intelligence (Goleman *Emotional Intelligence*; Goleman *Working with Emotional Intelligence*; Zachary 5-6*;* Cranwell-Ward 204; Ensher and Murphy *Power Mentoring* 197-98; W. Johnson *A Framework* 137-38) and interactional style (Goleman *Social Intelligence*; Higgins et al.).

The role of mentee initiative in creating what they term multiple mentor networks leads de Janasz et al. as well as Johnson and Ridley to observe that those who seek to grow in important career competencies will actively seek out these relationships. These competencies include a knowledge of their identity, task proficiencies (what they term the "knowing how"), and the network of relationships that will help facilitate their career performance and advancement (de Janasz et al. 82-84). In fact, they provide guidance that urges the "ideal protégé" to commit to assessing their needs/goals and building a network of such developmental relationships (de Janasz et al. 86). Later work by Higgins applying a contingency perspective on positive work relationships describes how the specific structure of these networks (the social arenas from which the people come and the role

they play) will ultimately be best served by the needs of the mentee. For example, a

mentee who is most interested in promotion within the organization may find that a

developmental network made up of people largely within the organization, those who

will be responsible for making promotional decisions and/or who will have significant

influence or credibility regarding that process, may be best. If the mentee has a different

career goal (e.g., work satisfaction, per Higgins), then that person's network might be

more helpfully drawn from multiple social arenas or involve different functions of

members of that network (needing "friends" or "mentors" as opposed to "sponsors" or

"allies") (Higgins 218-19).

Within the scope of this research project, the concept of a developmental network

is crucial to understanding the full potential benefit of developmental relationships for a

college or seminary graduate making the transition from the academic experience to full

time pastoral ministry. One must be cautious to avoid the mistaken assumption that such

developmental influence happens exclusively through one relationship (i.e., the

traditional "mentor"). Research in this context must consider the benefit of multiple

mentoring or other developmental relationships that may be beneficial. Theory and

research suggest that graduating seniors could be better equipped for making this

transition by being encouraged to be intentional in establishing such developmental

networks for themselves and to consider and assess their specific needs or objectives in

their vocation. In contrast to the business world or other professional realms, promotion

may not be a primary career objective yet the need to develop competency in specific

job-related tasks or perceived weaknesses or gaps in knowledge may, indeed, be critical

considerations in building a truly beneficial developmental network.

**Mentoring Practices**

Mentors (and those who train and supervise them) show mixed consideration in relation to specific practices and techniques; some view specific discussion of them as helpful and others see such discussion or training as limiting. For example, in the early part of their discussion about technique, Megginson et al. provide a description of the arguments against and for the intentional use of techniques. The arguments against techniques include not only the perceived premeditated nature that runs counter to a more preferred "in the moment" approach for mentoring as well as the inability of mentors (in some cases) to know how to use the techniques well and the more analytical (they label it "atomistic") approach to learning upon which they are based (Megginson et al. 26). Mindful of these concerns, they rightly suggest, however, that a knowledge of techniques can have a beneficial effect by equipping mentors to have a broader set of tools and provide greater benefit to mentees when rightly utilized (26-27).

Klasen and Clutterbuck describe an ongoing learning cycle of four steps anchored in ongoing experience and reflection on that experience. The cycle includes four components: having an experience, observing the experience, concluding from the experience, and then, based on those conclusions, modifying behavior (Klasen and Clutterbuck 173-74). The cycle continues *ad infinitum*. One of the great benefits of the educational process in mentoring is learning *in situ*. A mentee is addressing what they are experiencing in their work, not merely talking about concepts divorced from the context of experience. Megginson et al. describe a similar dynamic with a three-step learning process that begins with exploration and moves to new understanding that then produces action. The effectiveness of a mentor's work results from the capacity of the mentor to

guide the mentee through such a process in which both persons seek to learn from the discussion.

Because mentoring involves learning in the context of relationship, conversations are a key process by which this learning cycle is fostered. Megginson et al. describe what they label the "learning conversation." This conversation begins with what they call reaffirmation, a re-establishing of relational connection and opportunity to discern affective state. A second step in this conversation involves an identification of the issue for discussion, which is presumed to come out of the experience of the mentee. This is also an opportunity to establish why this issue is (or should be) the object of discussion along with its timeliness. Thirdly, both mentor and mentee build mutual understanding by analyzing the issue and exploring its underlying dynamics as well as the various aspects of the mentee's experience of the issue. Of particular importance in this phase of the conversation is the asking of questions and the resistance to falling into "solution mode." The effort here is to better understand the issue in all its intricacies, not jumping too soon to "fixing" the matter. Eventually that exploration reaches a saturation point, at which time the pair can then move to the fourth stage of the conversation, exploring solutions. At this point, then, creative brainstorming about next steps becomes a mutual activity. As a part of this process, the mentor can help not only with identifying possible solutions but also in making practical decisions about implementation (e.g., setting helpful deadlines, determining assessment criteria for success, etc.). The final stage of the conversation provides an opportunity then for reviewing what has occurred to ensure mutual understanding and then clarifying responsibility on the mentee's part for following through (Megginson et al. 23).

The stages of the learning cycle can be clearly seen in such a conversation. The conversation begins with identification of an issue that derives from the experience of the mentee. Then mentor and mentee explore the issue (in the context of the experience) after which they draw conclusions about that experience (by creatively considering alternative action). Finally, a decision is made regarding action going forward, hence the modification of behavior based on reflection on that issue and experience. Both mentor and mentee ultimately benefit from learning as a skilled mentor both guides the process and draws on her or his experience involving that issue.

Central to guiding this effort is the practice of active listening, question asking, and providing meaningful feedback (Cranwell-Ward; Johnson and Ridley; Klasen and Clutterbuck). In fact, one of the primary roles of the mentor is to be a thoughtful and patient listener. Klasen and Clutterbuck suggest that mentors should anticipate that about eighty percent of a mentoring meeting should be given to listening on their part or perhaps reflecting and paraphrasing what they hear a mentee saying with regard to the topic of discussion (179). This posture of proactive listening includes the avoidance of interruptions and distractions (Johnson and Ridley 75-76) and providing significant direct eye contact and nonverbal encouragement (Cranwell-Ward 199). At times, a key factor may even be the willingness to entertain poignant silence to allow a mentee to gain a powerful insight (Megginson and Clutterbuck 31).

For greatest effectiveness in the learning conversation, this posture of active listening is paired with thoughtful question asking. The goal in such a relationship is development, not necessarily problem solving. Asking good open-ended questions allows for the kind of analysis and reflection that the aforementioned learning cycle requires. For

this reason, Johnson and Ridley encourage would-be mentors to "ask Socratic questions" (67-69). Drawing on the method of the Greek philosopher, Socrates, they suggest three types of helpful questions. *Clarifying questions* identify underlying assumptions and values. *Challenging questions* address error or limited thinking. Questions that address *implications and consequences* prompt the recipient to outcomes and appropriation of ideas and belief.

Such questions and the learning conversation that they both prompt and guide become useful for both mentor and mentee to gain insight, perspective, and motivation for responding. Megginson et al. identify seven layers of dialogue that happen in these mentoring conversations, that build upon each other and increase in both depth and potential impact (32). Social dialogue involves the relationship and includes elements of encouragement and support (psychosocial function of mentoring). Technical dialogue addresses the mentee's job-related tasks and functions. Tactical dialogue focuses on the issues that a person experiences in both their personal and work-related lives and begins to touch on solutions to those issues. Strategic dialogue addresses the larger context and the long-term vision for a mentee's life. Dialogue for behavioral change, the sixth layer, helps to identify outcomes and involves brainstorming of possible steps for change (i.e., increasing impact). Finally, integrative dialogue looks at matters of perspective and connections between issues and experiences as well as deeply rooted values.

One can see the value in Socratic question-asking in guiding the movement through layers of dialogue toward a goal of meaningful growth and development. While early in the mentoring relationship, great attention may need to be given to cultivating the relationship (i.e., through social dialogue). If the goal of the mentoring experience is to

foster personal development, greater intentionality in moving the learning conversation to matters of strategic interest, behavioral change, and integration should eventually become an objective. Thoughtful question-asking and careful listening provide techniques that enable such a process to happen.

Given that mentoring involves a learning *relationship*, attention not only to the learning process and content but also to the *quality* of that relationship is important. Of particular importance for such relational quality is the building of trust. People involved in mentoring relationships consistently identify trust as a significant component of an effective experience (Allen and Poteet 67; Cranwell-Ward 179; Cunningham and Eberle 58; Liang et al. 174). This aspect of trust is especially true from the perspective of mentors (Cunningham and Eberle) but also appears in research among *both* mentors and mentees (Allen and Poteet; Liang et al.). Trust is a foundational factor that enables other relationship practices like transparent learning conversations and meaningful encouragement. Zachary argues that "the potential for real learning in a mentoring relationship increases commensurate with the level of trust" (118). Research by St-Jean shows trust (along with another relationship factor, "perceived similarity) as having a significant influence on all three mentoring functions: psychosocial, career, and role-modeling (210). Several studies have shown the potential problems that can occur when trust fails or is not present whether by deliberate action or by accident (Johnson "Ethical Considerations…" 107).

Antecedent variables have been identified as contributing to the experience of trust in mentoring relationships. Leck and Orser build on the theoretical work of Mayer et al. on organizational trust in emphasizing the contribution that factors like a mentor's

perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity play in establishing a mentee's perception of trust (see also the later follow up discussion by the same theorists in Schoorman et al.). Erdem and Aytemur draw from work by Whitener et al. in highlighting mentor behaviors that contribute to the experience of trust in relationship: competency, predictability, fairness, communication, showing interest, and the sharing of control (Erdem and Aytemur 61). Both models also identify the inclinations of a mentor/mentee to trust as factors that influence the degree of trust in a relationship.

Trust develops over time and is often cultivated in relationships through particular behaviors. Johnson and Ridley emphasize the role that honesty and consistency over time play in trust development. Cranwell-Ward highlights self-disclosing behaviors as particularly valuable in this regard. The open sharing of personal information builds both rapport and trust in such a relationship. Research by Erdem and Aytemur found that the sharing of control and fair behavior by the mentor were particularly influential in building trust in a mentor (60).

Theoretical models of trust also highlight the role that risk, or perceived risk plays in the development of trust. Trust is inextricably linked with risk, a reality that is implicitly expressed in definitions of trust often given in the literature (see, for example, Mayer et al. 712). For this reason, the self-disclosure of personal information plays a significant role in helping to cultivate trust (Cranwell-Ward 178). The sharing of such internal thoughts and feelings risks acceptance/rejection and potential misuse of such confidential information by the other (Ensher and Murphy 186). Over time a mentee will "test" the trustworthiness of a mentor by intentionally sharing highly confidential

thoughts, requesting greater help, or revealing a weakness or failure (Johnson and Ridley 98).

Closely related to this matter of trust, but also distinct as a key element, is mutuality, the practice of learning *together*. That mentoring as a "two-way street," as Ensher and Murphy describe it (67ff), is expressed in multiple ways in the literature. In some cases, mutuality involves the idea that mentees are not the only persons who gain by involvement in such a learning relationship but rather that mentors also receive both career support and psychosocial benefits (Ensher and Murphy 97-99). In other cases, mutuality involves a recognition that learning happens not only by the mentee but also by the mentor (e.g., Mullen and Noe), a phenomenon that sometimes reaches such a level that this mutuality is labeled "reverse mentoring," in which a mentee has greater competence in a particular subject or skill and "mentors" the mentor (Ensher and Murphy 48-49). In other cases, mutuality is expressed as a cooperative dynamic in the relationship and a perception of equality in status, the concept that both mentor and mentee are *working together* cooperatively to learn from their various experiences (see, for example, Liang et al. 173, 176; Sanyal 148). This element of mutuality has been shown to be especially important in the developmental benefits of peer relationships and its related practice of peer mentoring (Kram and Isabella 117, 129; McManus and Russell 282).

Of particular concern with mentoring relationships has been the matter of *beginning well*, and, in this regard, two issues stand out as having received special attention: the matching of mentor and mentee and the clarification of expectations as the relationship is beginning. Both are understood to be factors that can either provide an

opportunity for a successful developmental and learning experience or that can become a barrier before there is even much of a relationship. However, a mediating factor may exist in the relationship match between mentors and mentees: whether the relationship is informal (and hence, initiated by either mentor or mentee without any formal programmatic element) or formal (as a part of an established mentoring program in the workplace).

Although several variables have been understood to play a role in a successful mentoring experience, the perceived similarity between mentee and mentor has seen strong support in studies of both informal and formal mentoring (Allen, Eby, and Lentz; Ensher and Murphy *Power Mentoring*; Ensher and Murphy "Effects of Race…"; Johnson and Ridley; St-Jean). This element of "chemistry" is expressed as a function of similarity in not only personality and interests but also values and goals (Ensher and Murphy *Power Mentoring*; St-Jean). Yet Ensher and Murphy showed that the perception of similarity mattered more than actual similarity ("Effects of Perceived…").  Jones' longitudinal study demonstrated that this element of similarity was particularly (and for, her, surprisingly) influential in the early portions of her study, but over time participants began thinking (or perhaps discovering) that some limits existed to the benefit of similarity (J Jones 402). In that study, difference was found over time to be a factor that contributed to significant learning; dialogue with someone who views or does something differently helped mentees learn what they likely would not have learned on their own.

For informal mentoring relationships significant interest has focused on the qualities that make mentees attractive for selection by a mentor. Because such relationships are not "arranged," studies have recognized that qualities like a mentee's

willingness to learn, need for help, past job performance, and ability/potential may motivate selection by a mentor (Allen; Allen et al. "Protégé Selection"; Ensher and Murphy *Power Mentoring*; Olian et al.). Of particular interest is the fact that research seems to show that a mentee's need for help/learning is not likely to be a strong factor in selection by a mentor (Allen et al. "Protégé Selection"). Rather, a mentee's willingness to learn and their ability or potential appear to be more salient in the decision making of a potential mentor with a willingness to learn as the most significant (Allen; Allen et al. "Protégé Selection"; Ensher and Murphy *Power Mentoring*).

The early stages of the relationship for formal mentoring programs are experienced a bit differently. Rather than a relationship forming more organically at the initiative of one or both members, a formal mentoring program typically matches participants for mentoring relationships, and, in such cases, the effectiveness of the "match" is considered a significant factor in the ultimate success of the mentoring experience. Blake-Beard et al. found significant variation in how this matching process happens in workplaces based on a diverse set of factors, but they describe three general categories (see also, Finkelstein and Poteet 353). *Administrator-assigned matching* is the method that simply involves a choice by a workplace administrator to pair mentees with mentors. This matching can be driven by organizational goals, geography, or other factors determined by the business agenda or at times is simply a personal choice, what Blake-Beard et al. call the "hunch method" (623). The benefit of this approach to matching is often strong alignment with the overall organizational agenda. *Choice-based matching* is that category of assignment that affords mentors and mentees the opportunity to select those who will be together with the obvious benefit that greater ownership and

commitment to the relationship will exist. *Assessment-based matching* is an approach that involves pairing individuals according to their complementarity determined by results of inventories (they cite examples like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and PeopleMatch). The obvious benefit of this approach is that participants can work together with greater effectiveness based on higher levels of self-awareness and the complementarity of strengths that each brings to the relationship.

While each approach has its strength, each also has its challenges. The administrator-based matching can result in low levels of ownership by either mentor or mentee, and, if the approach is based simply on the judgment of the administrator, the strength of the match could depend greatly on how good the "hunches" of the administrator are. The choice-based approach results in high buy-in by the participants but could result in such similarities between them that the opportunity for learning is inhibited. Likewise, the risk exists of being chosen last or not at all. Finally, the assessment-based approach is more complex, could have higher costs (if such assessments are not already a part of workplace culture), and lacks a personal side (Blake-Beard et al.). Given such limitations, two key conclusions stand out regarding this important issue of matching mentors and mentees. First, research seems to suggest that some element of input by participants in the matching process has a positive effect on mentoring outcomes (Allen et al. "The Relationship between…" 141; Finkelstein and Poteet 352-53). Second, intentionality in the matching process provides greater effectiveness in the mentoring relationship than mere random or hunch-based assignment (Blake-Beard et al. 626).

Concerning both formal and informal mentoring relationships, experts generally agree that a key practice near the beginning of the mentoring relationship is common agreement between mentor and mentee on expectations (Sanyal 148). Often this constitutes the agenda of a "first meeting" for the participants in the mentoring relationship. This clarification of expectations can include practical items such as frequency of meetings, locations, etc. (Johnson and Ridley 112). Additionally, however, this discussion should include topics like confidentiality (an important step in cultivating trust), other issues of trust, openness of communication, willingness for challenge and confrontation, honesty of feedback, etc. (Cranwell-Ward 172-73; Megginson and Clutterbuck 26-27). Practitioners encourage the use of some sort of written agreement to articulate such expectations with clarity, variously labeled "mentoring charter" (Cranwell-Ward 174), learning contract (Megginson and Clutterbuck 26-27) and mentoring partnership agreement (Zachary 128). Research suggests that only about twenty percent of mentoring pairs issue some sort of formal agreement, but several items are understood to have been discussed between mentors and mentees: their goals for this mentoring relationship, the expectations that they have of each other, and agreement on how they will manage the mentoring experience going forward (Cranwell-Ward 175). Such a contract is analogous to the intentional establishment of a covenant described in the spiritual and ministry mentoring literature above.

**E-mentoring**

Over the past two decades, a new form of mentoring has developed utilizing new interactive technologies. The practice of e-mentoring (also at times labeled virtual mentoring, cyber mentoring, telementoring or email mentoring) has pursued the

developmental relationship through various electronic communication technologies like email, video conferencing, text messages, online chats, etc. (Bierema 484, Ensher and Murphy, "E-mentoring," 300). Such communication allows for the provision of the kinds of mentoring functions that were previously understood to be provided by face-to-face mentoring (also referenced in the literature as tMentoring, for "traditional" mentoring, or FtF mentoring for "face-to-face")—both career and psychosocial support (Bierema 483, Bierema and Merriam 212). Given the relative newness of these types of mentoring relationships, the research is limited but suggests both potential strengths and weaknesses.

Avoiding an overly simplistic understanding of the dynamics of such a relationship, Ensher and Murphy categorize e-mentoring based on the degree to which they depend on what they term computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 300-01). Some e-mentoring relationships are CMC-only, meaning that the communication between mentor and mentee is *only* electronic. Relationships in this category generally involve mentors and mentees who do not work at the same location (Ensher et al. 275). Other e-mentoring relationships fall into the CMC-primary category which refers to the fact that most of their interaction is via electronic means but may include an occasional face-to-face meeting or phone call. The third category is described as CMC-supplemental in which the relationship is generally fostered through face-to-face interaction but may occasionally use electronic communication out of convenience. They suggest that many e-mentoring relationships likely begin as FtF mentoring relationships and then slowly transition to CMC-supplemental relationships over time ("E-mentoring" 300-01).

E-mentoring has been championed as having several hopeful benefits for the practice of mentoring. First, this approach has the potential to increase access. Bierema calls this approach "boundaryless," noting that people interested in mentoring are not limited by organizational context or geographic proximity (Bierema 485; Bierema and Merriam 214; Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 304; Ensher et al. 280; Ghods and Boyce 504). Accessibility is also enhanced, at least within asynchronous forms of e-mentoring, in that participants can respond to one another as available and not at prescribed or scheduled times, working around other time commitments (Bierema 485). Accessibility to increased contacts with mentors outside of the organization or typical social networks is available (Single and Single 308).

E-mentoring also shows promise for greater diversity with a decreased focus on demographics like age, race, gender, or other factors like status or special needs (Bierema 485-48; Bierema and Merriam 214; Shpigelman et al. 920; Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 304; Ensher et al. 281-82; Ghods and Boyce 504; Hamilton and Scandura 392; Single and Single 302). In addition to demographic barriers, other personality factors and skills which may inhibit effective face-to-face interaction can also be overcome, characteristics like shyness, social inhibition, and difficulty in expressing thought (Bierema 487; Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 305; Hamilton and Scandura 391). For example, in one study Smith-Jentsch et al. found evidence confirming the predictions of the Cues Filtered Out theory, that "the absence of visual and vocal cues in text-based computer-mediated communication alleviates social inhibitions" (196). Finally, some researchers also note the benefit of a paper trail of sorts, a record of the

interactions behind mentor and mentee at least within those e-mentoring relationships which are CMC-only (Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 304; Ensher et al. 282).

Yet, given the uniqueness of establishing "relationships" with such technology, some challenges also exist for e-mentoring. One challenge often cited is the increased possibility for miscommunication or misunderstanding (Bierema 487; Bierema and Merriam 221; Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 305; Ensher at al. 276). The lack of visual cues and access to nonverbal behaviors, particularly in text-only interactions, can result in higher probability of misinterpretation, particular regarding humor and confrontation. In addition, research suggests that a lower commitment to the relationship and a lengthier time for trust and rapport to develop exists in the relationship (Bierema 487; Bierema and Merriam 221; Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 305). Given the critical nature of trust in such developmental relationships, this issue is significant and yet can be overcome. Single and Single emphasize that effective training can help mentors become better at communicating affectively in ways that help build trust (315). Effective e-mentoring also requires participants to have a degree of comfort and capacity to use technology effectively (Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 307). One study, for example, found that a mentee's previous experience using the internet was a significant factor in the results of their e-mentoring experience (DiRenzo et al. 300). Whether one is a savvy user of technology is not the only issue, but also whether one has developed the skills necessary for this form of mentoring, particularly written communication, not only of technical matters, but *affect* as well (Ensher et al. 278). Moreover, the nature of the interaction in this type of mentoring relationship also provides significant limitations for the role modeling function that one finds in FtF mentoring (Bierema 491; Ensher and

Murphy "E-mentoring" 315). Hamilton and Scandura suggest that some form of passive

role modeling can occur through the interactions between mentor and mentee though they

acknowledge this is significantly limited when compared to tradition FtF mentoring

(393).

Other potential challenges for e-mentoring include the negative consequences of

what are sometimes its advantages. While the benefits of masking demographic factors

can provide a more egalitarian experience for participants by avoiding responses based on

stereotype, these characteristics can also be masked so much in the e-mentoring

experience that important differences get overlooked or ignored. Ensher and Murphy, for

example, cite a study by Thomas that looked at cross-race mentoring relationships that

were effective.  In these cases, acknowledging the racial difference was considered by

participants to be important to the experience ("E-mentoring" 306). In addition, while a

record of interactions can be an asset for reference, the added risk of the violation of

confidentiality and privacy exists (Ensher and Murphy "E-mentoring" 305; Ensher et al.

279-80). Such a record could be discovered, even inadvertently by others, or in some

cases later shared intentionally by one member of the relationship in a situation where the

relationship ends poorly.

As noted above, e-mentoring provides both advantages and challenges for

developmental relationships. Given some of the challenges, researchers suggest that in

many cases e-mentoring should be an alternative embraced where traditional FtF

mentoring is not practical (Single and Single 305). That said, e-mentoring may actually

provide greater benefits than traditional FtF mentoring as in the case of special needs

youth (Shpigelman et al.). Much of the research on e-mentoring so far has been only in

text formats (e.g., emails, chats, etc.). The growing availability of video conferencing

technologies like FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Facebook Messenger Rooms, Google Meet,

etc. is making this modality more accessible. Some early research suggests that video-

conferencing and other mixed-modality interactions raise effectiveness (Ghods and

Boyce 507; Sanyal 150). Likewise, initial research also suggests that some of the

challenges of e-mentoring can be meaningfully addressed with quality training (Ensher et

al. 284-85). Ensher and Murphy acknowledge that e-mentoring may never replace

traditional FtF mentoring but could be a valuable supplement to other techniques and

practices ("E-mentoring" 318).  Bierema recommends a hybrid of true social interaction

with the CMC of e-mentoring for best results (493).

E-mentoring may be a valuable tool for mentoring those making the transition

from the academic life to full-time pastoral ministry. E-mentoring's capacity to overcome

the limitations of geographical proximity expands the potential members of a new

pastor's developmental network. Moreover, while some new to pastoral ministry are

serving as associates on the staff of a larger church where intra-organizational mentors

may be readily available, others are serving as sole pastors of smaller churches, often

isolated from potential experienced mentors. While the limitations of e-mentoring should

always be kept in mind, the potential for supplemental developmental learning with the

growing availability of such technological tools should not be overlooked.

## Adult Education Theory

Because mentoring involves a learning relationship, adult learning theory offers

helpful insight into the processes and strategies that can enhance that learning. In some

cases, these theories generate methods that are specifically designed for the classroom,

but all speak to the kind and quality of learning for those who are beyond adolescence. Learning for adults is understood as focused on real life situations and the development of practical intelligence and wisdom in addition to the psychological developmental elements of personality and identity, all of which are directly relevant to the transition from academic life to vocational pastoral ministry (Tennant and Pogson 3). Educational theory makes a distinction between academic intelligence which addresses performance for abstract, theoretical tasks while practical intelligence involves the appropriation of knowledge for real-life tasks (Tennant and Pogson 26). The importance of that distinction is especially pronounced for the specific developmental transition with which this project is concerned. Three facets of adult learning theory, all of which are related, are particularly helpful in shaping the effectiveness of learning in and through developmental relationships: self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformative learning.

**Self-Directed Learning**

In contrast to understandings of learning as merely transmitting content from teacher to student, Knowles famously described the deep need that adults have to direct their own learning as foundational to adult learning theory (Knowles et al. 40, Merriam et al. 120). In such a setting, the most effective teacher is a facilitator engaged in "mutual inquiry" (Knowles et al. 40). The self-directed learning approach of Knowles (and others who followed in his footsteps) focused on setting an atmosphere in which such learning could happen and then assisting a learner in assessing learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying resources, selecting and engaging in learning strategies/techniques, and evaluating the learning (Merriam et al. 110; Tennant and Pogson 132). Some models view this as a linear process, others as a more interactive

process, but most tend to focus on the importance of the instructor serving as facilitator and learning as an interactive process that typically involves critical reflection (Merriam et al. 110-17).

The links to the leaning process in a mentoring relationship are noticeable. Zachary, for example, highlights the need for self-direction in adults as a key adult educational factor that impacts the mentoring process (5). Such a relationship is deliberately "mentee-centered." Based on the literature, in the most effective of such relationships, the agenda is established by the interests and decisions of the mentee based on their life and vocational experiences. While the mentor brings (at least in most conceptions of mentoring) a greater level of expertise and broader life experience, the most effective relationships involved a mutuality and shared experience of learning. This phenomenon is consistent with what research on adult learning demonstrates.

In addition, early in the relationship mentors likely should encourage and assist a mentee in setting meaningful goals and then refer them back to such goals as the relationship continues to unfold (Johnson and Ridley 115; Zachary 10). Even more strategically, mentors should be aware that they are not only helping a mentee craft goals in this specific situation, but they are helping mentees learn *how* to do this as an *ongoing personal practice* that will enhance their learning in the long term. Mentors are helping their mentees "learn how to learn" which will become an empowering, long-term life experience for their mentees (Tennant and Pogson 132).

**Experiential Learning**

The paradigm of experiential learning (also referred to as Experienced Based Learning or EBL) offers fruitful insight into the way in which adult learning happens

most effectively in the mentoring experience. The questions and issues that arise in a mentoring conversation come out of the life and vocational experience of the mentee. Experiential learning keeps the experience of the learner central to the learning process (Andresen et al. 225; Kolb 20). In fact, experiential learning theory links the concepts of work, education, and personal development in its understanding of the educational process as the three domains come together in the mentoring experience (Kolb 4).

Drawing on the prior work of education researchers like Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget, David Kolb gave experiential learning theory its classic and foundational articulation. He viewed learning as an adaptive process that involved encountering conflict between expectations and one's personal experience and then stepping back from that experience to think carefully and intentionally about why that is case. The learner reaches conclusions and then reengages with experience to test one's new expectations. In other words, more than mere experience was required for learning or, as Kolb states, is, "The simple perception of experience is not sufficient for learning; something must be done with it" (42). Thus, for Kolb, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (38).

Extending Lewin's understanding of a learning cycle, Kolb described an ongoing process that included four key "modes" which he also linked to abilities that could be developed in the learner. The first was the concrete experience of the learner in which some form of tension or conflict is experienced typically regarding the expectations the learner had. Second is the reflective observation of the learner about that tension which intentionally seeks understanding of the experience by viewing the experience from different perspectives. This mode is then followed by a third mode referred to as abstract

conceptualization in which a learner uses logic and concepts to analyze the experience by integrating ideas and concepts. The fourth mode is active experimentation which is more focused on practical application and the implementation of the insight gained through previous modes (Kolb 30; Merriam et al. 164).

The fundamental role of a teacher in the experiential learning process is as facilitator of the critical reflection in which a learner is engaged. By asking questions, a teacher can both challenge the perspectives of a learner while also supporting and validating the knowledge that a learner is creating (Merriam et al. 169). In this way, the asking of questions is one of the most valuable tools that someone in the role of teacher can utilize for the learning process. By doing so, they facilitate reflection-on-action, a critical step in constructing knowledge from previous experience. Merriam et al. note that a teacher can also serve as catalyst by creating exercises in which learners experience something and then reflect on the experience. Though more directly applicable to a classroom setting, conceivably a mentor could, in discussion with a mentee, invite participation in a role play similar to a prior experience of the mentee to foster reflection or offer the opportunity to experiment with practice. Interestingly, Merriam et al. additionally note that a teacher could become a student's mentor, a role which they describe as a "life guide" whose influence extends beyond the classroom both in terms of time and breadth of learning (169).

In Kolb's development of the theory, he describes the tendency of individuals to favor one mode or learning style (76) but emphasizes that learning is most effective when learning is ongoing (cyclical) and when it includes all four learning modes (Foley 42). In fact, the developmental dimension to the broader theory features three phases that begins

with acquisition from childhood through adolescence, moves into specialization during

adulthood, and eventually includes a trajectory toward integration in latter adulthood. In

other words, development is measured by the balanced use of all modes of learning.

The ongoing learning cycle as highlighted in experiential learning theory has

strong similarities to learning cycles employed by Klasen and Clutterbuck and also by

Megginson and Clutterbuck in the business workplace mentoring literature (see above).

Brockbank and McGill make that connection even more explicit in applying such a

learning to the mentoring process. They view the "single loop learning" process (which

includes experience, reflection, generalization, and testing) as particularly helpful in

instrumental learning that leads to improvement in work or performance, but which does

not, generally speaking, challenge underlying values, frames of reference, etc.

(Brockbank and McGill 33-34). They view this as a practice of functionalist mentoring,

similar to Blodgett. Deeper learning and change come through processes by which those

foundational thought and affective structures are considered.

**Transformative Learning**

Transformative learning theory also views a learner's experience as a critical

component in the educational process but is more focused on deep learning at the level of

values, underlying assumptions, frames of reference, beliefs, and perspective. In this

sense, transformative learning is particularly concerned with the change in meaning

structures, the schema by which a person makes sense of their experience of the world

around them. The theory, as described by Mezirow, draws heavily on Habermas's

description of the differences between two types of learning: instrumental and

communicative. Instrumental learning involves knowledge that is used to control or

manage the environment around us and is the type empirically tested to determine what is true. Communicative learning is concerned with the meaning that others convey when they communicate with us and involves the questioning and/or validation of meaning through interaction with others (Mezirow "Learning to think" 77; Mezirow "Transformative Learning" 20).

Given these overarching concerns, transformative learning theory has several key elements. First, the *individual experience* of the learner serves as the prompt for learning but also provides knowledge and content which contributes to interaction. Second is *critical reflection* which is seen as essential in the transformative learning process (Cranton 33; Merriam et al. 134; Taylor 7). This kind of reflection can happen at three different levels: content (*what* is the perception, thought, feeling, action, or the description of a problem), process (*how* one perceives or problem solves in the experience), and premise (the *"why"* which gets at the underlying assumptions and frames of reference) (Cranton 34-35, Merriam et al. 145; Taylor 7). The primary means by which this critical reflection takes place is through *reflective discourse* with others (i.e., Habermas's communicative learning). Dialogue with others leads to new understandings and new perspectives. Transformative learning theorists are clear that this is not so much a debate or argument, but is a more collaborative, consensual discussion in which an effort to find agreement that validates meaning and frames of reference exists (Merriam et al. 134; Mezirow "Learning to Think" 78; Taylor 9). For this to happen effectively, Mezirow writes that participants must possess a degree of emotional intelligence (Goleman *Emotional Intelligence*; Goleman *Working with Emotional*

*Intelligence*) and a more collaborative relationship (more democratic, in contrast to a teacher as authority or expert) (Mezirow "Learning to Think" 79-81).

To these classic core elements in transformative learning theory Taylor adds what he labels a *"holistic orientation,"* in that knowledge is understood to have more than mere rational or cognitive dynamics but also the affective and relational (10-11). The *context* of the learning is an important element both the proximal context as well as that of the larger society (11-12). Particularly important to the mentoring context is the element of *authentic, trusting relationships*. Because transformative learning is concerned with change in deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives and that genuinely reflecting on such beliefs can feel threatening, reflective discourse can only effectively take place in a safe, trusting social context (Mandell and Herman 81; Taylor 13).

Foundational work in transformative learning theory identified ten "phases of learning" that begin with what Mezirow labeled a "disorienting dilemma" and concluded with reintegration back into life with a transformed perspective (Mezirow "Transformative Learning" 19, Merriam et al. 135-36). The phases in between are marked by critical reflection in dialogue with others that includes the purposeful examination of one's assumptions, the exploration of new roles, relationships, action, and also the planning for action that can be taken in light of the experience of changing paradigms or frames of reference (Mezirow "Transformative Learning" 19).

Particularly important to the processes of critical thinking and discourse in transformative learning theory is the practice of asking questions. Cranton emphasizes the importance of specificity for such questions, a movement from general to the particular

including the use of follow-up questions to encourage even more specific responses or to invite nuance in thinking, of open-ended questions that cannot be answered simplistically, and of questions that draw on the personal experience of the learner (138-39). Cranton ties the asking of questions to the levels of reflection: content, process, and premise (139-40).

The implications for mentoring are apparent. The capacity for engagement with a transformative learning process rests on an authentic, trusting relationship. The mentoring relationship provides the potential for a safety, vulnerability, and trust as noted earlier in this chapter. This dynamic would emphasize the need to intentionally develop trust in the mentoring relationship. In addition, transformative learning theory highlights the importance of asking strategic questions and not merely providing easy answers or rushing to a solution mode too soon. Mentoring practices which challenge the mentee through active listening and probing questions are likely to be more effective in the long term.

## Generational Theory and Research

Though generational differences are not a recent discovery, over the past three decades demographers, sociologists, and psychologists have been identifying what Sbanotto and Blomberg call "generational cultures," a set of generalized characteristics that capture values and perspective for those born across a roughly eighteen-year span. These observations often evoke both positive and negative valences that can lead to both handwringing (e.g., Twenge tends to see the glass "half empty" in describing the current emerging generation) and optimism for the future (e.g., Seemiller, and Grace and Shaw project a rather hope-filled world-changing future for the cohort they describe). Such

generational identities are often narratively constructed through shared powerful crisis experiences or "social moments" (Strauss and Howe 71), selective memory, and stories (Carroll and Roof 63). In addition to describing the characteristics of generational culture, such research also suggests that cohorts change over time in a sort of generational life cycle (Strauss and Howe 32).

For purposes of this study, such generational differences have an impact in at least two ways. First, the mentoring relationship is typically a cross-generational relationship. By traditional definition, the mentee is often younger and less experienced, and the mentor is older and more experienced, belonging to a generation (or two or three) ahead. The effectiveness of counsel and advice shared in such a relationship and even the manner in which that influence is exerted will likely be affected by generational differences. Best practices will need to be informed by a meaningful knowledge of generational culture. Second, generational differences also factor into the dynamics of pastoral leadership in the local church. Such dynamics both shape ministry practice and also catalyze conflict. For example, Sbanotto and Blomberg suggest the ways that ministry practice could (and at times, should) be customized for generational values and needs. Carroll and Roof highlight the ways that emerging generations clash with the inherited tradition of a congregation (the kind of conflict also highlighted by Gordon MacDonald). Robert Webber, in describing those who were at the time "the younger evangelicals," identified some of the ways their generational culture shaped their approach to church and ministry, a shift from business models of leadership to servant leadership and strong engagement with the priesthood of all believers, a recovery of the church as counterculture, and a refocusing on the church's mission as the presence of the

kingdom (132, 151). Mentees who are getting started in their ministry experience are likely to face such leadership dynamics and may find that the experienced and wise counsel of a mentor is particularly helpful.

The literature identifies several generational cohorts which mentees will encounter: Boomers (generally identified as having been born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981, named by the title of Douglas Coupland's novel that captured the spirit of the generation as it was emerging), Millennials (born between 1982 and 1995), and now Gen Z (born after 1995) (Sbanotto and Blomberg; Seemiller and Grace). Given the nature of such generalizations, lines between the generational cohorts are not necessarily hard and clearly delineated, and often overlap for those who are born near the approximate boundary lines used for generational identification.

The mentee focus of this project falls in the years right after some Millennials have moved out of the college season of life and into ministry (and other vocational options). Millennials were noted for being highly individualistic and rather self-focused (Sbanotto and Blomberg 171). Dubbed the "Me Generation," they are a cohort often described as approaching life and particularly work with a sense of entitlement (Sbanotto and Blomberg 176-77). They have a strong value for personal choice, preferring multiple options (Erlacher 10). Even their understanding of truth, particularly moral truth, is shaped by a more postmodern *zeitgeist* that understands truth as not only relative, but personal (Egeler 58; Sbanotto and Blomberg 181). Yet they also seem to be driven by a strong sense of purpose, unlikely to perpetuate practices without an understanding of the way those practices contribute to the overall vision and mission (Egeler 37; Erlacher 14).

They typically value relationships, even intergenerational relationships, and see such relationships as an opportunity for learning. Millennials frequently cite mentoring relationships as a sought-after means of learning (Erlacher 100-01; Sbanotto and Blomberg 187-88). Such mentors might increase their effectiveness by tying practice to a meaningful knowledge of such generational characteristics. Rather than simply suggesting one course of action, a mentor might, for example, describe several options from which a millennial mentee might choose or work intentionally to help a mentee connect practice with their broader sense of purpose and mission.

Other subjects in this study are more identified with Generation Z which is very different in significant ways from the Millennials. Born generally between 1995 and 2012, those in this generation are particularly marked by what is often term "delayed adulthood." In fact, Twenge, after examining several measures/markers for the transition to adulthood, concludes: "The entire developmental trajectory, from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, has slowed" (*iGen* 41). This extension of development has led to the labeling of such a season (that was initially observed in the Millennial generation) as "emerging adulthood" (Arnett 1; Shaw 124). For the mentor concerned with a mentee's development, attention to such matters may very well be essential. A mentor may need to give greater emphasis to adult developmental considerations than they experienced in being mentored in the transition from their collegiate academic experience to vocational ministry.

More than anything else, members of Gen Z are known for their usage of technology, particularly their dependence on smartphones that provide both connectedness to the world and access to almost unfathomable amounts of information

(Elmore *Marching* 38-41; Seemiller and Grace 39-55; Twenge *iGen* 49-68; White). Dubbed "digital natives" and often referred to as "screenagers," most members of this generation have never known a time without an internet connection in their hands (Barna Group 15). As they walk through adolescence more than half (57 percent) report using screen technology more than four hours per day with 26 percent reporting they use screen technology more than eight hours per day (Barna Group 16). Twenge even reported that an informal survey of her undergraduate students revealed that nearly all of them slept with their phones, "putting them under their pillows, on the mattress, or at the very least within arm's reach of the bed" and even describing as "a lifeline or as an extension of their bodies or like a lover" (*iGen* 49-50). Some describe their reliance on their smartphones with the language of addiction (Elmore *Marching* 42; Twenge *iGen* 291). Elmore cites a Pew Research Center report that noted that "students put technology in the same category as air and water" (Elmore *Marching* 63). Though very premature, some emerging indication exists that technology usage among members of Generation Z may even have neurological developmental effects, appearing to be altering the ways in which such students think (Barna Group 17; Turner 110).

This "digital bond" that many in Generation Z feel to their smartphones has several potential implications for the mentoring process. The bond suggests that effective mentoring will in some manner utilize screen technology, at a minimum for communication, but perhaps also a subject of conversation regarding its effects on a mentee's ministry work, particularly the potential implications for limiting face-to-face interaction and inhibition of effective social engagement. The digital bond may also suggest the need for a mentor to be aware that their mentee's relationship with their

phone (language that is often used by Generation Z) will be experienced differently than their own.

Never has a generation had so much information available literally at their fingertips. Finding information, whether one is a university student or a post-graduate pastor in ministry, is not a challenge. Information is universally and easily available and in many places that are not necessarily peer-reviewed or even expertly curated. The greater challenge for this generation appears to be learning to evaluate the credibility of information (Twenge *iGen* 308) and even un-learning misinformation (Seemiller and Grace 203-4). This again is suggestive of how a mentor could potentially be helpful to a novice pastor. The wisdom that comes from the practical experience of a seasoned mentor could effectively guide the newer pastor in assessing what she or he is finding from available sources.

The impact of technology and the values of Generation Z suggests important considerations in approaches to learning. Members of Generation Z show a preference for practical learning, valuing "hands-on" learning more than other approaches (Adobe Educate; Seemiller and Grace 204). Typically, this preference means that they are less likely to read long articles or books. Generation Z is much more likely to watch short videos that demonstrate or teach something. They have an affinity for being shown something first and then being given the opportunity to try (*e.g.*, a YouTube video that features someone demonstrating how to do something, and then trying it for themselves) (Seemiller and Grace 207). In guiding educators, some even suggest "gamifying" activities with points, competition, and badges as a way of contextualizing content for students in Generation Z (Elmore *Marching* 51).

A final distinctive of Generation Z is the prevalence of uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety, and depression when compared to previous generations (Seemiller and Grace 149; Twenge *iGen* 100-101). Twenge cites statistics from the American Freshman Survey (of students entering undergraduate education) that show "every indicator of mental health issues on the survey reached all-time highs in 2016" (*iGen* 103). Surveys by the American Collegiate Health Association show similar increases on such measures with nearly 60 percent of undergraduate college students reporting that they "felt overwhelming anxiety" and about 38 percent saying they had been "so depressed they could not function" (Twenge *iGen* 103-04). While many factors may influence these growing levels of anxiety, extensive use of social media appears to be primary, resulting in unreasonable expectations and significant dissatisfaction (Freitas; Twenge *iGen*; Barna Group). While full concerns regarding mental health are well beyond the scope of this project, the high levels of insecurity and anxiety among members of Generation Z may suggest an increased importance of psychosocial functions of mentoring. These concerns may suggest the vital importance of practices like affirmation and encouragement by a mentor.

### Research Design Literature

This research project utilizes a mixed methods research design to identify best practices for mentoring of graduates of the Christian Ministries program at Bethel University in their first few years of full time vocational pastoral ministry. Though a significant body of research exists regarding mentoring processes in the business sphere, very little examination has been done of the application of these practices in pastoral formation. As Swinton and Mowat note, the ways in which theological concepts and

ministry practice are "interpreted, embodied and worked out are deeply influenced by specific contexts and individual and communal histories and traditions" (85). Given such a reality, the field would benefit from a more developed contextual understanding of mentoring for pastoral ministry. Solely quantitative practices would fail to capture the fullness of this experience in ministry, particularly in the early stages of understanding this context. A more qualitative analysis would be essential to draw out this richness (Marshall and Rossman 57).

Qualitative research practices are especially suited for such an effort. Max Von Manen emphasizes the role that qualitative research methods play in understanding "the meaning of lived experience" (62). Sensing concurs by noting that qualitative research is "grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience" (57). By utilizing research tools like interviews, the researcher can obtain a fuller understanding of the experience of persons in that particular context. Patton describes how interviews allow a researcher to "enter into the other person's perspective" and better understand the meaning that other person ascribes to their experience (341). Interviews can be particularly helpful in analyzing professional experiences and knowledge (Flick 197). The interviews in this study offer value in clarifying what Flick calls "implicit knowledge" about professional practices (197). Qualitative research has the value of providing what Miles and Huberman describe as "richness and holism," and even "providing 'thick descriptions' that are vivid, nested in a real context" (10).

Utilizing multiple methods has the value of providing greater validity to the interpreted results. In this project, practices like data triangulation and methodological triangulation provide helpful validity and a fuller picture of the practices under study

(Flick 183). Sensing emphasizes the importance of data triangulation in D.Min. research (74). In this project, the collection of data from multiple sources and populations (graduates in their first seven years of full-time pastoral ministry, experienced pastors with multiple years of experience, and faculty who teach at other similar academic institutions) provides a richness of data and a higher level of validity of findings.

This project aims to identify best practices for mentoring by listening carefully to those who need mentoring and to those who have experienced mentoring in that transition from the university setting to that of full-time pastoral ministry. The mixed methodological approach taken here provides not only a measure of validity but a fullness and richness of understanding.

## Summary of Literature

Mentoring has a rich biblical and theological foundation anchored in the doctrine of the Trinity and modeled by Scripture characters like Deborah, Jethro, Moses, and Paul. Likewise, mentoring has a rich tradition in the spiritual formation tradition and, more informally, in the pastoral formation tradition. The historic phases of friendship in that tradition, revived and given contemporary application by Anderson and Reese, inform the practice of mentoring in current times.

Mentoring for ministry has been a priority and practice for many leaders in ministry, typically focused on those in proximity to effective and successful leaders (e.g., Biehl; Wright; etc.). In some cases (and some phases of mentoring), this includes practices which cultivate the relationship itself: establishing trust, affirmation/encouragement, hospitality, and mutuality. In other cases, this includes practices which help foster spiritual growth and maturity. Finally, some practices help

build ministry competence, particularly, in the scope of this project, helping mentees with the practical application of concept/theory in the real-life ministry setting.

Much of the literature in this regard is anecdotal and is drawn more from historical practice and personal experience of the effective leaders who do it rather than from systematic research. While valuable, this insight could be even more effectively applied with intentionality as informed by careful research in the specific context of pastoral ministry.

The business/career mentoring literature provides helpful insight on the utilization of mentoring practices beyond that context. The functions and phases of the mentoring process in this literature suggest that practices should be adapted to the particular phase/stage in which a particular mentoring is in. Later expressions of this research suggest that engaging multiple developmental (mentoring) relationships—both internal and external to an organization—may provide even greater effectiveness. In relation to specific practices, active listening and attentiveness to a learning cycle are especially critical for effective mentoring. Finally, use of digital technology has become much more widespread and shows promise for enhancing mentoring practices despite its limitations regarding relationships and the potential for miscommunication.

Because mentoring is a learning relationship, adult learning theory informs the learning cycle that Klasen and Clutterbuck describe within the business mentoring field. The paradigms of experiential learning and transformative learning inform the learning conversations that mentors have with mentees. Research suggests that for those conversations to be effective, participants must identify an experience (in this case, in the practice of ministry or in personal development), reflect on that experience, strategize

alternative responses, and then re-engage ministry experiences with new insight. The critical reflection that enables the most transformative learning to occur happens most readily in the context of a trusting relationship in which challenging questions can be asked and discussed. Mentoring provides just such a context.

All of this happens most effectively with a mindfulness to the generational context of the mentoring relationship. The subjects of this study fall within the Millennial and Generation Z generational cohorts. Millennials value relationships (even intergenerational ones), value options, and are motivated by connections to greater purpose and vision. Members of Generation Z often show delayed adult development, strong dependence on technology, and value learning by watching and then attempting themselves. Mentoring practices that take such generational characteristics into account are likely to show greater effectiveness.

**CHAPTER 3**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

**Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter addresses the research methodology employed for this project. The chapter begins by revisiting the nature and purpose of the project and then moves on to specify the research questions that guided the effort along with the portions of instruments used to address the question. Attention is given to the ministry context of the research interest. Finally, the chapter describes specifically how the project proceeded with a description of the participants in the study, the instrumentation utilized, and the methods for data collection and analysis.

**Nature and Purpose of the Project**

This research project aimed to discover best practices for multi-generational mentoring of Christian Ministries degree program graduates in their first few years of fulltime vocational pastoral ministry. The transition from academic preparation to engagement in vocational ministry entails substantial challenges. Significant differences exist between concepts discussed in a classroom and the real-life experience of vocational ministry. This shift from the *study* of theology to the *doing* of theology may be greatly helped by the assistance of a more experienced mentor (Anderson). This study is particularly concerned with the specific mentoring practices which enable a new pastor to make this transition more effectively.

Mentoring is a common practice in many vocational fields. Extensive research has been done on such practices in the context of the business world. Much of the popular mentoring literature related to ministry is either anecdotal in nature (typically drawn from

the experience of a popular ministry leader) or focused primarily on spiritual formation rather than the professional practices of the minister.  This research project seeks to provide research-based guidance on best practices specifically in the context of the experience of students who have recently made that transition from academic preparation to full time vocational ministry.

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**Research Questions**

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Completing this project requires a set of research questions that help to clarify both the distinctive context of those in their early years of pastoral ministry and the adaptation of common mentoring practices for that context. With that in mind, the specific research questions for this project were designed first to establish needs that are unique to the context of Christian ministry. Another addressed the specific practices that were especially helpful given that context. Finally, consideration was given to the practices already utilized by other institutions.

**Research Question #1: What needs and challenges do ministry graduates face in their first few years of ministry that require counsel and/or assistance from experienced mentors?**

The purpose of this research question was to identify the specific needs that new pastors face in their first few years of ministry experience. To answer this question, fifteen semi-structured Newer Pastor Interviews were conducted. Questions 1-2 established length of tenure in ministry and specific ministry activities. Questions 3-5 identified the dynamics of this transition from academic life to vocational ministry, the challenges faced in ministry, and the subjects on which newer pastors might find the counsel of a mentor helpful. In addition, this question was explored in greater depth with

a researcher-designed Newer Pastor Focus Group. As with the interviews, questions 1-2

established ministry roles and tenure for the participants. Questions 3-5 identified

dynamics of the transition from academic life to vocational ministry, challenges, and

subjects on which a mentor's assistance might be deemed as helpful. In addition, a

researcher-designed Experienced Pastor Focus Group was utilized to explore more deeply

the effective mentoring practices in the novice pastoral context. Question 1 of this focus

group established role in ministry and tenure. Question 2 addressed what prompted the

initiation of a mentoring relationship. Question 3 invited reflection on challenges in

which a pastor would have found a mentor helpful. The Institutional Practices Survey

included an open-ended question (Question 8) regarding these issues as well.

**Research Question #2: What mentoring practices have most effectively helped new**

**pastors with those needs and challenges?**

This question addressed the practices that were specifically helpful to mentees in

their ministry context. The semi-structured Newer Pastor Interviews were used to

discover these practices. Questions 6-8 explored the ways that mentoring practices were

both helpful and counterproductive to mentees. The Newer Pastor Focus Group also

addressed this with questions 6-7, exploring what mentoring practices were helpful in

addressing the needs and challenges faced in that context of transition. Question 8 invited

participants to identify what they perceive to be ideal mentoring practices. The

Experienced Pastor Focus Group also explored this more rigorously. Questions 4-5

invited reflection on mentoring practices that participants found helpful. Question 6 asked

about practices those participants have found effective in mentoring others. As with the

Newer Pastor Focus Group, Question 8 addressed perceived ideal mentoring practices.

**Research Question #3: What best practices do other learning institutions and denominational organizations use for mentoring graduates in the first few years of ministry?**

This question was addressed through a researcher-designed Institutional Practices Survey of faculty members who teach in ministry degree programs at Christian liberal arts colleges and universities. Question 2 of the survey inquired about formal matching of graduates with mentors. Question 3 addressed the encouragement of mentee initiative in seeking out a mentor. Question 4 probed the ways various mentoring practices are encouraged or taught. Question 5 inquired about cooperative mentoring programs with denominational offices, and Question 6 addressed the follow up that the various ministry departments might do with graduates. The open-ended Question 9 invites respondents to offer any description of ways they or their colleagues are facilitating mentoring for their graduates.

## Ministry Context

Bethel University is formally affiliated with the Missionary Church denomination, headquartered in Fort Wayne, IN. The Missionary Church has a worldwide presence but is organized by nation, such that there is the Missionary Church USA (in Bethel's context) and the Missionary Church of Nigeria, the Missionary Church of Jamaica, etc. The U.S. denomination describes itself with five primary core values: Biblically grounded, relationally connected, creativity embracing, leadership empowering, and kingdom minded (Missionary Church).

Not surprisingly, the theological identity of Bethel University is shaped by its denominational affiliation. The denomination currently affirms a general North American

Evangelical theological perspective but was shaped in its development in the early 1900's by a convergence of five theological streams: Anabaptism, Pietism, Wesleyanism, Keswickianism, and Evangelicalism (Cramer 5-8). Several of the distinctives of the denomination in its more formative years (e.g., a Wesleyan emphasis on holiness, entire sanctification, and an Anabaptist emphasis on nonresistant love of enemy) are no longer apparent in either the formal documents or in the informal practice of the denomination.

As an institution of higher learning, Bethel has a very general statement of faith that includes basic Evangelical elements like belief in God as creator and sustainer, the Bible as divinely inspired and authoritative word of God, salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the Church as empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a holy life and engage in God's ongoing mission in the world, and the personal return of Christ in the future (Bethel University "Mission and Institutional Profile"). Such a general statement is understood to be consonant with the theological positions of the parent denomination (the Missionary Church) and yet also to provide wide latitude for students and faculty from many different streams within American Evangelicalism. Overall, university faculty identify with a variety of such traditions (including Roman Catholic) though the faculty in the Religion and Philosophy Department, who teach the Bible and theology classes, would all place themselves within the Wesleyan-Arminian perspective.

Bethel students who come from faith backgrounds hail from a variety of churches and denominations. The largest such grouping is independent and community churches (18.3 percent). The next largest segment comes from the Missionary Church denomination (10.8 percent), the church affiliation of the university. A significant concern for the university leadership is that such a small percentage of the student body

comes from its parent denomination, and they have done research to try to determine why this is the case. Some of this seems a result of a growing move societally away from strong denominational loyalties among church members in general, while, in Bethel's case, this phenomenon also seems to be a factor of being in a region where a number of Christian colleges exist who serve in some respects as competitors. The remainder of students come from Roman Catholic (8.3 percent), Baptist (7.7 percent), United Methodist (4.6 percent), and Mennonite (2.3 percent) churches (Bethel University Office of Institutional Research and Assessment 5).

Spiritual mentoring as a discipleship practice is a strong value as a part of the campus community experience for students. About 75 percent of students are involved in discipleship mentoring relationship with staff and faculty at the university either in a one-on-one or small group context. The President's office, drawing on institutional research, notes that "students rank spiritual mentoring as the most prominent characteristic in their Bethel experience" (Bethel University "President's Office"). While spiritual mentoring as a discipleship practice is a strong value, no formal program exists for vocational mentoring either during the years a student is in college or post-graduation beyond what a student would be exposed to as a natural part of the internship experience that is a required component of the Christian Ministries major.

**Participants**

The participants in this study included graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University (IN) many of whom are serving in their first seven years of full-time pastoral ministry and others who have been in ministry for longer than

seven years. In addition, some participants were faculty members at colleges and seminaries similar to Bethel University.

**Criteria for Selection**

The newer pastors in the study were graduates of Bethel's Christian Ministries degree program who are serving in their first seven years of vocational ministry. They were selected from a list of graduates who meet those criteria and then were randomly assigned to either the interview pool or to the Newer Pastor Focus Group. Given the focus of this study on the transition from university studies to vocational ministry and given the temporal proximity of these subjects to this transition, the researcher determined these participants as able to serve as an "information-rich" purposive sample (Patton 230; Sensing 83). For their invitation to participate, these participants were contacted initially by email with the possibility of follow up via telephone call if needed.

However, more experienced pastors have a valuable perspective that can inform the discoveries of this study not only from their experiences as a mentee during that transition but also as mentors to others who are in that transition. The researcher chose participants for the Experienced Pastor Focus Group utilizing maximum variation sampling to draw insights from those who have diverse tenures in ministry, both men and women, and who come from diverse ministry contexts (e.g., rural, suburban, urban, and also size of congregation) (Sensing 84). As was the case with the earlier interviews, these participants were contacted initially by email with follow up via telephone call.

Finally, in order to draw on the practices already in use by like-minded institutions, participants for the Institutional Practices Survey were chosen because of their role as faculty who are teaching and advising students in their respective ministry

degree programs at member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges and

Universities (CCCU). These subjects were contacted via email and provided a link to the

survey.

**Description of Participants**

Given its focus on pastors in their early years of vocational ministry, this study

included twenty subjects who were graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program

who were in those early years of ministry. One of these participants had been in ministry

less than a year, ten for one to two years, seven for three to five years, and two subjects for

six to ten years. Three-fourths of the subjects (fifteen) were male. Another fourth (five) were

female. All were college graduates with seventeen having earned a bachelor's degree and

three having completed a master's degree. With regard to ethnicity, the participants were

largely Caucasian. Only two of the twenty indicated that they were of two or more

ethnicities.

The participants represented several Evangelical denominations. Nearly half, nine of

the twenty, were serving in a Missionary Church, the denominational affiliation of Bethel

University. In addition, three indicated they were serving in non-denominational churches,

two in the Assemblies of God, one in a Mennonite church, and one in a Baptist church.

Three subjects indicated that they were serving in churches that had no denominational

affiliation or "other" than the denominations listed on the demographic questionnaire.

They also served in churches of a variety of sizes and ministry contexts. One served

in a church with more than 3,000 attendees and six were in a church between 1,001 and

3,000 attendees. In the mid-range, two served in churches of 501-1,000 attendees and three

in churches of 201-500 attendees. Several also served in smaller churches. Five served in

churches with 50-100 attendees and two served in churches with less than 50 attendees.

(One participant who began their ministry in a church context serves now in a parachurch

organization and did not indicate a church size.) The largest number (ten) serve in a church

located in a small town or rural city. However, five of the participants serve in churches in a

metropolitan city. Four serve in ministry in the suburb of a larger city, and one is in ministry

in a rural area.

Five experienced pastors served as subjects for this study by participating in the

Experienced Pastor Focus Group; four were male and one female. Three indicated that they

were in the thirty-five to forty-four years of age category. Two were between forty-five and

sixty-four years of age. These experienced pastors evidenced greater completion of graduate

education. Four had completed master's degrees. The highest level of education for the fifth

was a bachelor's degree. Varied levels of tenure existed in ministry reflected in these

experienced participants. One had been in ministry for six to ten years, two for ten to twenty

years and two for more than twenty years. All were Caucasian in ethnicity though one

served in a church that was predominantly African American in membership.

Two were serving in churches in a small town or rural city. Three were serving in a

metropolitan city. A variety in the size of congregation they served existed. One served in a

church with 1,001-3,000 attendees, three in churches of 501-1,000 attendees, and one in a

church with under 50 attendees. In relation to denominational affiliation, two were serving

in Missionary Churches, one in the Church of God—Anderson, one in a United Methodist

church, and one in a denomination other than the choices offered on the questionnaire.

All the participants in the Institutional Practices Survey were professors that taught

in a Christian Ministries degree program at an institution of higher learning that had

membership in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Some taught biblical

studies courses, others theology courses, and still others ministry courses.

**Ethical Considerations**

Prior to participating, subjects for the interviews and focus groups were presented an

informed consent letter that described the purpose of the study, the protections afforded for

confidentiality, and the right of the subject to withdraw at any time. Before the interview or

focus group began, participants signed the letter giving consent. Subjects for the surveys

were given similar information as the first question on the online survey. Those who agreed

to the procedures outlined in the consent question then continued to the remaining questions

in the survey. Any who did not give consent in the first question were thanked for their

consideration and their participation was concluded. These informed consent letters and

questions are included in Appendix D.

Care was taken to protect the confidentiality of all participants. No subject was

named in reporting the findings of this project or described by any other personally

identifiable information. When referring to a specific subject in reporting the results, that

person is identified by the label "Pastor" and a number assigned to that subject. Data

gathered in the study was kept in a secure location, and an electronic backup was kept in a

locked desk in the researcher's office. Participants in the two focus groups were informed

that while care would be taken to encourage confidentiality, confidentiality could not be

guaranteed due to the presence of other participants.

## Instrumentation

Four researcher-designed instruments were used to collect the data analyzed in

this study: The Newer Pastor Interviews, the Newer Pastor Focus Group, the Experienced

Pastor Focus Group, and the Institutional Practices Survey. The interview was designed to gather initial data on the experience of newer pastors in their transition to vocational ministry with the focus groups and then to provide the opportunity to explore that experience in greater depth. The survey was designed to tap the broader wisdom and experience of like-minded institutions to avoid "reinventing the wheel" in the discovery of effective mentoring practices.

The Newer Pastor Interview was designed to capture the experience of Bethel graduates in those first few years of vocational ministry. Interviewing as a method allows the researcher to gain the perspective of the subjects in the study from their point of view (Seidman 17). Rather than *assume* what newer pastors' needs early in ministry are, this study seeks to discover these needs and practices that are especially helpful to newer pastors by listening to the perspective of people who are in this season of ministry. These researcher-designed, semi-structured interviews featured eight questions. Questions 1 and 2 established the tenure and context for the ministry of the pastor. Question 3 invited reflection on the gap between expectation and experience for pastors in that transition from school to vocational ministry. Questions 4 and 5 asked about challenges and subjects on which the perspective of a mentor would have been valued by a newer pastor. The final three questions invited reflection on actual mentoring practices experienced during their time in ministry. Question 6 asked for examples of times when the counsel of a mentor was helpful and what about that counsel made it helpful. Question 7 inquired about what mentors have done that was helpful, while the final question came from the inverse perspective, inviting responses about what had been unhelpful.

The Newer Pastor Focus Group explored the experience of pastors who have recently made the transition from academic preparation to vocational ministry more deeply and through the shared conversation among those subjects. Focus groups were included in the research project to add a thickness of perspective, given that the interaction between group members often yields richer data than merely interviewing the individuals by themselves (Sensing 120). The focus group was semi-structured and researcher designed. The first question in this focus group asked about the context and tenure in ministry for each participant. Question 2 inquired about whether each participant has had a mentor in these early years of ministry, and, if so, the way that mentoring relationship was initiated. The third question asked once again about the differences between expectations and reality in those early years of ministry. Questions 4 and 5 asked about challenges and topics on which the counsel of a mentor would have been helpful, desired, and valued. Question 6 sought examples of times when the help of a mentor was especially helpful. Coming from the other perspective, question 7 asked about times that mentors did things that were counterproductive. The final question invited participants to imagine what the ideal mentoring process would look like and what practices it would include.

The Experienced Pastor Focus Group added a layer of thickness to the perspective on mentoring practices by inviting the contribution of experience over a multiplicity of ministry contexts and length of tenure.  The information gathered through this instrument provided data on the benefits of these practices over time. This semi-structured, researcher-designed focus group included seven questions. The first question established the tenure and ministry context for each of the participants and was designed to foster

rapport among the participants. Question 2 asked about whether participants had a mentor during their early years and how that relationship had been initiated. Question 3 inquired about challenges that participants have faced in ministry about which the counsel of a mentor was or would have been helpful. Question 4 asked for specific examples of times the counsel of a mentor was helpful and particularly what about the mentor's practices were helpful. Question 5 asked about times when a mentor failed or disappointed the participants. Question 6 changed the perspective from mentee to mentor and asked participants to describe practices they have found helpful when they have mentored others. As in the earlier focus group, the final question invited participants to imaginatively describe practices in an ideal mentoring process.

The final instrument was the Institutional Practices Survey that gathered data on practices already employed in institutions like Bethel University. This researcher-designed survey aimed to add breadth to the data for the research project by identifying best practices already in use for students in that transition from college to vocational ministry. The first question in the online survey provided for informed consent. Question 2 asked whether students from their institution were formally matched with a mentor in their first three years of full time, vocational ministry. Question 3 invited further description of how that was done (if the respondent had answered question 2 affirmatively). Question 4 asked if the subject specifically encourages pursuit of mentoring following graduation specifically in a class in their ministry degree programs. Question 5 provided a series of mentoring practices, and for each practice asked if the practice was taught or encouraged in a class, encouraged a faculty/student relationship, encouraged in printed or electronic materials given/sent to graduates, encouraged by

other means, or not specifically taught or encouraged. Question 6 inquired about whether they work collaboratively with denominational officials to formally match graduates with ministry mentors. Question 7 asked about follow up with graduates to see if they have initiated a relationship with a mentor. The final two questions (8 and 9) provide for the opportunity of open-ended responses to gather richer and more specific data on their practices. Question 8 asked about challenges their graduates face in those early years of ministry. The final question (9) asked more generally what they and their colleagues do to facilitate mentoring of graduates early in their ministry.

**Expert Review**

The researcher consulted with four experts on the research design and instruments for this project. Primary guidance was given by Dr. Beverly Johnson-Miller, the dissertation coach, who suggested the combination of a focus group for new pastors and a focus group for experienced pastors to provide a richness of perspective on mentoring practices. The design and instruments for the study were also reviewed by Dr. Kent Eby, Dr. Terence Linhart, and Dr. Elizabeth McLaughlin, all of whom provided valuable suggestions for clarity of questions for the interviews, the focus groups, and the survey.

**Reliability and Validity of Project Design**

The focus of this multimethod research project was the distinctive experience of new pastors as they make the transition from academic preparation to engagement in vocational ministry. Given Swinton and Mowat's contention that "the qualitative researcher must ask the vital questions: 'Who can help me address my research question?' How can I best help them help me in terms of method…'" (54), semi-structured interviews were determined to best enable the researcher to gain insight into

this experience. In-depth interviews provide an effective means to learn about what cannot be observed, being the internal dynamics of an individual's experience (Patton 341; Seidman 9; Sensing 104). Marshall and Rossman maintain that along with observation, "interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that people hold for their everyday activities" (110). Given the vital importance to this study of the experiential context of those in their early years of ministry, interviews (both individual in-depth along with focus groups) provide the best method to answering the research questions.

The reliability of the information generated by those interviews is enhanced in this project through the establishment of a rigorous and systematic approach to data gathering. Miles and Huberman emphasize the importance of diligence in design and procedures, including clarity of research questions, comparable data collection protocols, and expert review (278). Attentiveness to what Flick calls "procedural reliability" includes a concern for comparability across interviews (483). In this study, care has been taken to develop and utilize the same question protocol for all semi-structured interviews with questions carefully derived from the specific research questions that are of concern for this study. Furthermore, focus groups were used to supplement the interviews as a means of seeking richer data and helping to avoid unnecessary researcher bias in leading the conversation or responses. Finally, the procedures followed in this study were subjected to expert review and are carefully documented to provide the opportunity for others to repeat the approach.

In addition, to strengthen validity for the project, data and methodological triangulation was used, drawing information not only from subjects in their early years of

ministry but also from those who have served in vocational ministry for multiple years and have the benefit and wisdom that more extensive experience provides. Maxwell notes that "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods" helps to reduce what he calls "chance associations of systematic biases due to a specific method" (112). With that in mind, this research study employed multiple methods for data gathering (interviews, focus groups, and surveys) and purposeful sampling, particularly for the Experienced Pastor Survey participants, to help increase validity. The researcher took measures to ensure that the subjects for the in-depth interviews were different than those engaged for the focus group interview to avoid the potential for any interactive effects in the research.

## Data Collection

This project utilized a mixed methods research design to identify best practices for multi-generational mentoring of graduates of Bethel University's Christian Ministries degree program. Qualitative research, as Swinton and Mowat note, "takes human experience seriously" (30). With this focus, "qualitative research involves the utilization of a variety of methods and approaches which enable the research to explore the social world in an attempt to access and understand the unique ways that individuals and communities inhabit it" (28). As Denzin and Lincoln stated, such research makes "the world visible" (3).

To draw out this human experience, the first instrument employed in this research project was the semi-structured interview. As Patton notes, interviews allow a researcher to learn from people "things we cannot directly observe" (340). An in-depth interview allows a researcher "to enter into the other person's perspective," a crucial contribution to

this research project (Patton 121). Seidman writes that "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (9). To maximize effectiveness of this tool in unpacking that experience, the researcher constructed an interview protocol based on insights from the literature review. These questions included queries about the distinctive needs for which subjects thought a mentor would be helpful in their ministry contexts. In addition, the questions asked about practices that were effective as well as practices that were not to help identify perceived "best practices." Fifteen semi-structured interviews then were conducted in-person and via Zoom videoconference. These interviews were recorded, and then the recordings were transcribed using the Otter AI audio transcription app. The transcriptions were analyzed for common themes across the experiences of the fifteen interviewees.

To supplement data from the interviews, the second instrument employed in this project was the focus group. As Sensing notes, "the synergy of the group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group had been interview separately" (120). The researcher conducted two focus groups of five persons each via Zoom videoconference. One focus group consisted of Bethel Christian Ministry graduates in their first seven years of full-time ministry. The other featured more seasoned pastors with a range of experience. Question protocols were developed and customized for each group based on insights from the literature review for this project. These focus groups were recorded, and transcripts of the recordings were made using the Otter AI audio transcription app. The transcriptions were then analyzed and coded for common themes.

To provide broader context and additional perspective, a survey was sent via email to professors in ministry degree programs at institutions like Bethel University using the SurveyMonkey platform. Questions for the survey were constructed utilizing the insights gleaned from the literature review and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Follow up emails were sent later to enhance the response rate for the survey.

## Data Analysis

The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were coded for recurring words and phrases regarding both needs and practices. These codes were then analyzed and grouped into larger themes indicating both significant needs for a which a mentor would be helpful and best practices in the experience of the interviewees for addressing those needs.

Likewise, the transcripts from the focus groups were also coded according to a similar process. The transcript for the Newer Pastor Focus Group was analyzed for themes related to both needs and practices, and the transcript for the Experienced Pastor Focus Group was analyzed for themes related to practices which participants both experienced and utilized in their ministry. These themes were then compared with those found in the interviews and synthesized into a more wholistic picture of mentoring experience and practice in Christian ministry.

The data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the degree to which graduates in those degree programs are formally matched with mentors and the degree to which different mentoring practices are encouraged or taught. The data were synthesized with the themes derived from the interviews and focus groups.

**CHAPTER 4**

**EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

**Overview of the Chapter**

Graduates of Christian Ministries degree programs face unique challenges in the transition from academic preparation to the practice of vocational ministry, challenges for which the counsel and guidance of an experienced mentor can be especially helpful. Much of what has been written and taught about mentoring in those early years of vocational ministry has come from the perspective of experienced mentors and often renowned Christian pastoral leaders. Little has been done to explore the challenges and effective mentoring practices from the perspective of these newer pastors.

The aim of this study is to identify best practices for multigenerational mentoring of graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University who are in their first few years of vocational ministry. In particular, this project seeks to identify the challenges and issues that these newer pastors face for which the wisdom and guidance of a mentor would be especially helpful as well as the practices that mentors have used and can employ to be more effective in providing developmental guidance.

**Participants**

Except for those completing the survey, the participants in this study were all graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University. Twenty of the participants are "newer pastors" who are in their first seven years of vocational ministry. Five other participants are "experienced pastors" who graduated more than seven years ago and have been serving in ministry for more than seven years.

The subjects for the personal interviews were about two-thirds male and a third female, and all ranged in age from eighteen to thirty-four years. Most were Caucasian in ethnicity, though two of the subjects described themselves as being of two or more ethnicities. One subject had completed a graduate degree with all the others having completed a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. Most had been in ministry for either one to two years or three to five years, though one had been in ministry for six to ten years, and one for less than a year. Almost all serve in ministry in a church context. The one who currently serves in a parachurch ministry organization had previously worked in ministry in a church setting. The locales and sizes of churches in which they serve show a nice diversity. The largest proportion serve in a small town or rural city, but others serve in a variety of locales. The sizes of churches in which they serve vary widely. Nearly half serve in Missionary Churches, the denomination with which Bethel University is affiliated but several served in non-denominational or unaffiliated churches. One works in pastoral ministry at a Baptist church.

Figure 4.1

## Newer Pastor Interviews - Demographics
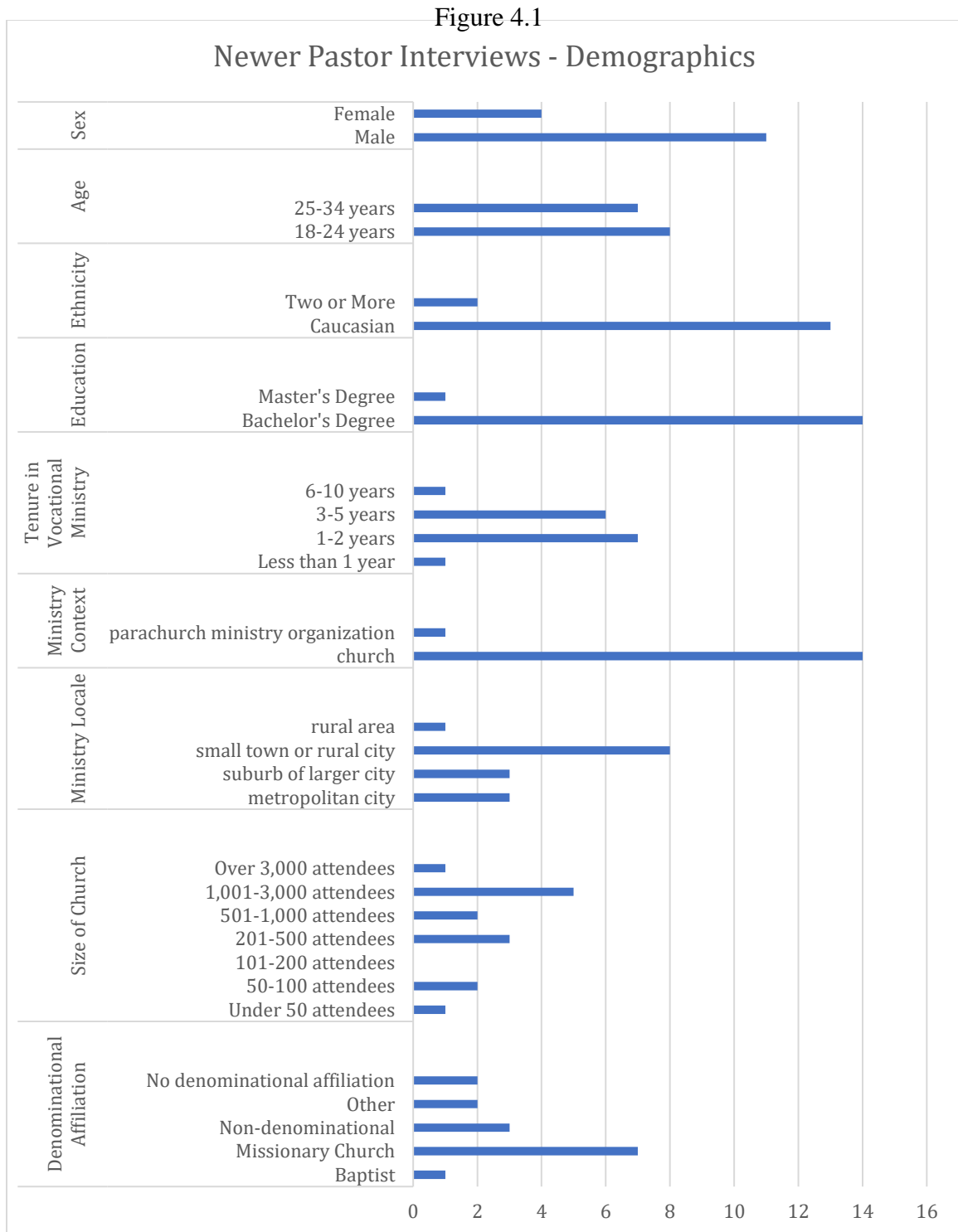


The five subjects who participated in the Newer Pastor Focus Group included one

female and spanned age categories between eighteen to thirty-four years old. All were

Caucasian in ethnicity.  Two of the five had completed Master's degree. All served in a church ministry context but with a variety of tenures in ministry. Three of the five had served for one to two years while another had been in vocational ministry for three to five years and one other for six to ten years. The locales and sizes of their churches shows some variety. Four of the five served in churches that were one hundred or less in worship attendance. One served on the staff of a larger church (1,001-3,000 attendees). Two are serving in Missionary Churches, Two in Assemblies of God, and one in a Mennonite congregation.

Figure 4.2

## Newer Pastor Focus Group - Demographics
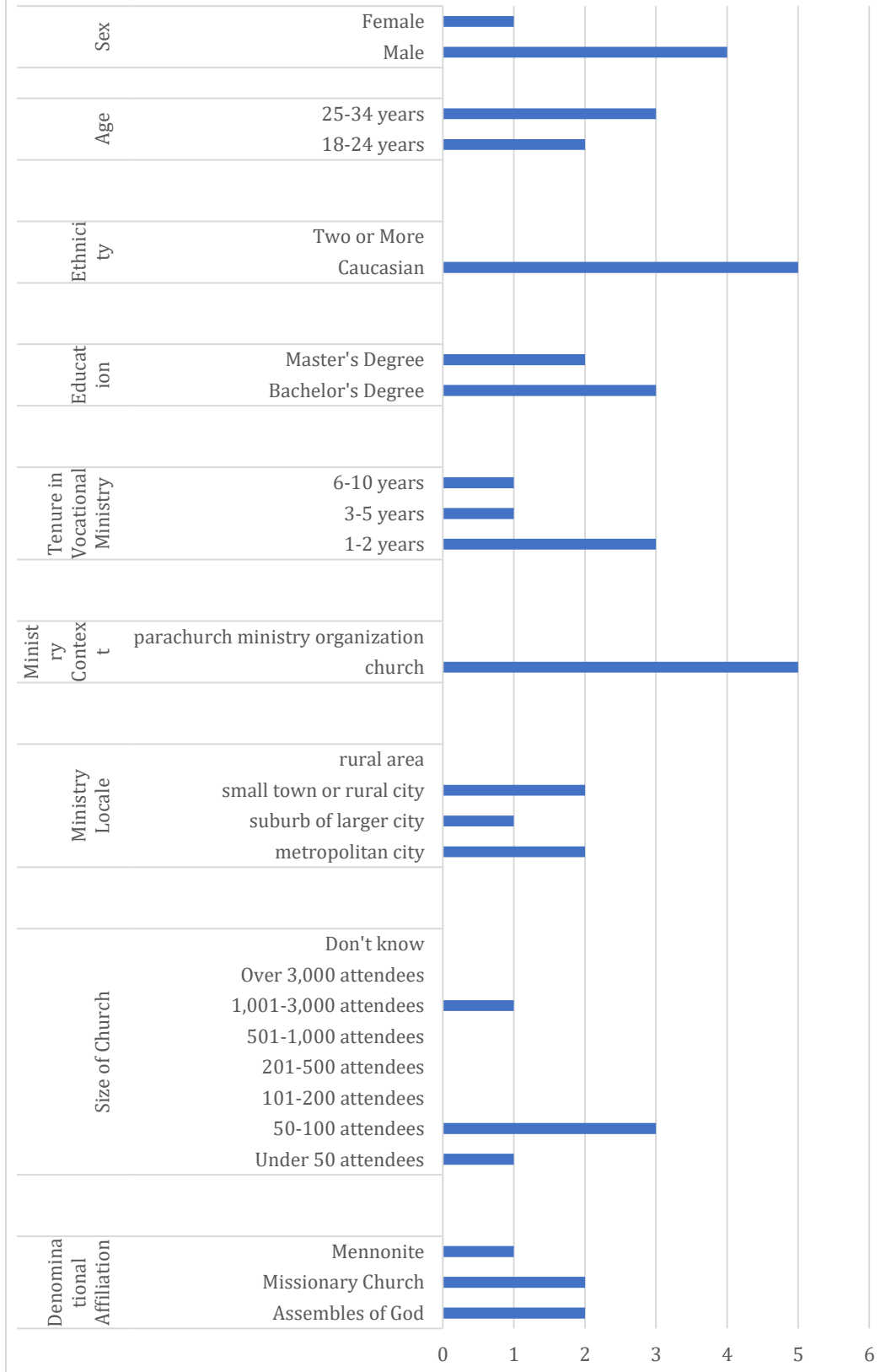
The five subjects who participated in the Experienced Pastor Focus Group included one female and fell into age categories between thirty-five and sixty-four years old. They were all Caucasian in ethnicity though one pastor serves a church congregation that is predominantly African American. They are particularly distinctive from the newer pastor subjects with a higher tendency to have completed a graduate degree (e.g., four out of the five participants have done so). All these focus group subjects responded out of their experiences in a church setting though one also had experience in ministry in a setting outside of the local church parish. These pastors came from small cities and metropolitan city locales. None was from a rural setting. They served in churches of a variety of sizes from under fifty worship attendees to churches of 1,001-3,000 attendees. They also exhibited a degree of denominational diversity, with two serving in Missionary Churches, one in a Methodist church, one from the Church of God—Anderson, and another from a denomination identified simply as "Other."

Figure 4.3



Experienced Pastor Focus Group - Demographics
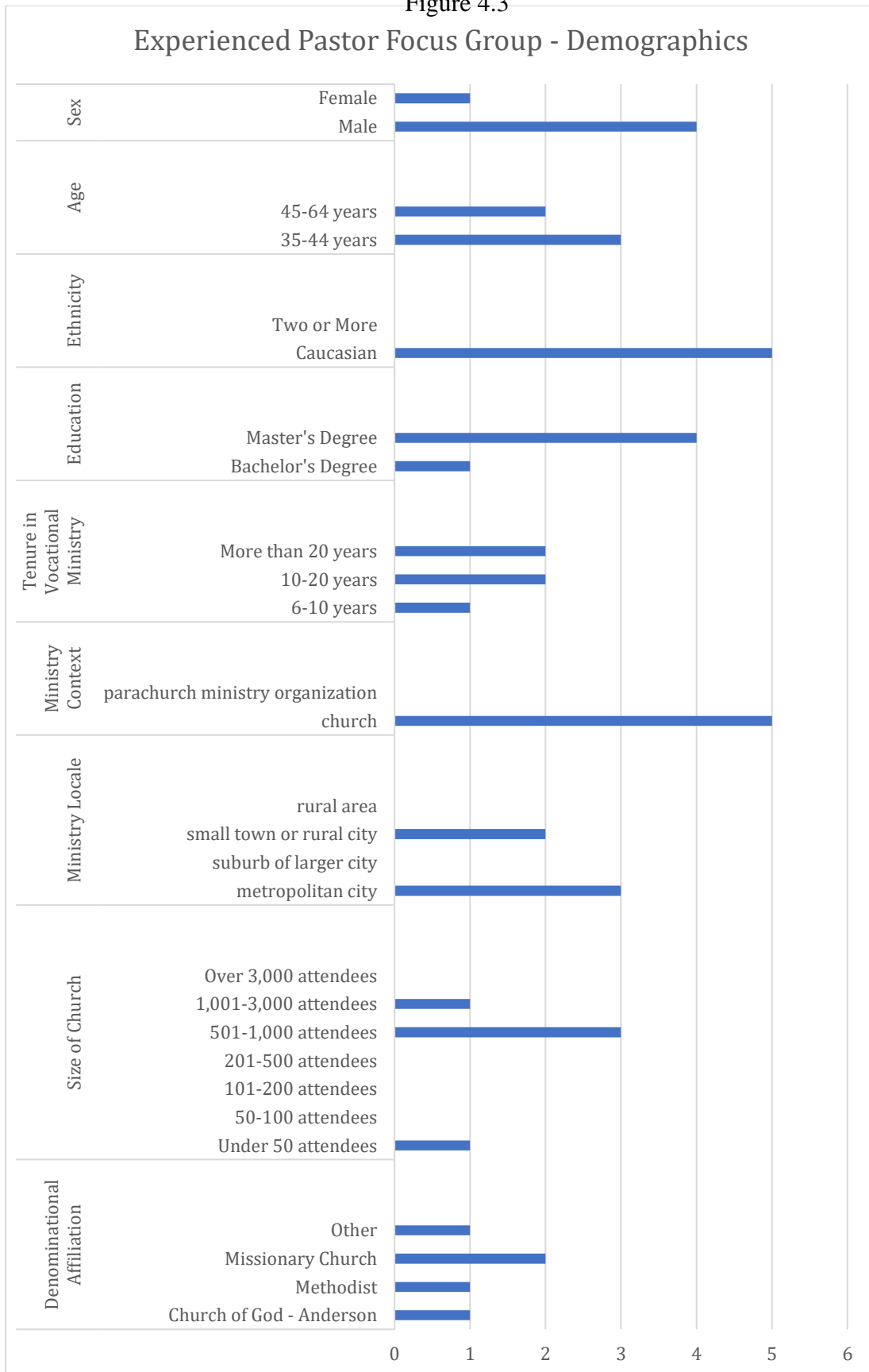
**Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

**What needs and challenges do ministry graduates face in their first few years of ministry that require counsel and/or assistance from experienced mentors?**

The data to answer this question was collected through the Newer Pastor Interviews, the Newer Pastor Focus Group, the Experienced Pastor Focus Group, and the Institutional Practices Survey. Questions 3-5 of the Newer Pastor Interviews specifically asked about these needs and challenges. Likewise, Questions 3-5 for the Newer Pastor Focus Group inquired about this information. Question 3 of the Experienced Pastor Focus Group asked about these matters. Question 7 of the Institutional Practices Survey collected open-ended responses regarding these challenges.

**Major Themes – Newer Pastor Interviews**

In the Newer Pastor Interviews several primary themes emerged in the subjects' responses.

**Work-Life Balance**. One of the most described needs/challenges described in the Newer Pastor Interviews was this issue of establishing a healthy work-life balance. Eleven of the fifteen subjects described this in some way when reflecting on the challenges that they have faced in the early years of ministry about which the counsel of a mentor had been or would be helpful. Newer Pastor 13, for example, saw this as essential for a lengthy tenure in ministry: "If I actually do want to be in ministry for the long run, I'm going to have to, like, have a life outside of just work." Others saw even short-term risk in not addressing this need soon. "…You can oftentimes look judgmentally on pastors who have fallen," said Newer Pastor 5, "until you get to a point where you're like, you're run ragged after an 80-hour week in a really, really cool ministry. And then

you get a moment alone, and you feel the attacks of, whether that's demonic or just like, you've been through it and you're exhausted…"

This tension between work and personal life is driven by several elements according to the interview subjects. Newer Pastor 5, for example, described this tension as an expectation embedded in culture: "American culture does not praise you when you take a day off. It's more how many have you worked… and worked hard?" For others, the tension derives from the large demands of ministry and the volume of tasks that need to be completed. Newer Pastor 13 said: "But even just working late at the church, or every single day is filled with something ministry. And there's no moment for me to just be me." Newer Pastor 3 found that "it's also really easy to bring a lot of your ministry home with you." The expectations of others (people in the church, staff supervisors, parents of youth, etc.) were particularly identified as driving this challenge. Newer Pastor 11 said: "…and then people have expectations for my wife, and my students have expectations for my wife. And you know, parents have expectations. And it gets really complicated." Newer pastor 14 said, "I'm like, how do we live up to the expectation of the church and get everything that needs to be done done, but also honor a Sabbath, to take a break, but then also honor my marriage."

Several newer pastors who are married described this as creating tension especially in their relationships with their spouses. Newer Pastor 5 said, "And I felt like I was forced to oftentimes choose between, like, doing things at the church or for church, or being at home with my wife, and that led to more conflict between us and things we've worked through." Newer Pastor 7 described a similar tension: "I mean, I'm married. Like, I have a job. Like, I have other responsibilities I need. There's just so much to

juggle there…. And it can be really frustrating and hard and leave you really empty."

Newer Pastor 14's experience was similar: "…the biggest challenge that [SPOUSE'S

NAME] and I faced was, all of the sudden, I'm working a ton of weekends. And when is

the time for [SPOUSE'S NAME] and me? Like when do we get to just spend time

together? And in ministry, a lot of nights are like that, and all of the sudden you're

working 50, 60 hours a week. And what am I spending with my spouse?"

Several subjects noted that the need to set boundaries to protect this balance is

something they've heard about and known about, but the guidance of someone else could

be helpful in working it out in practice. Newer Pastor 13 said: "I knew that we talked

about that at Bethel. But, like, when you're in it, you don't really know that—at least I

didn't know I was in it. And so, I was just like, I'm so tired." Newer Pastor 15 described

a similar experience: "And so I thought, like, oh easy, like, obviously you just create

boundaries. And that all it is. But then where you're in it, and you love what you're

doing, it's a lot harder to say no to something you want to do."

**Time Management**.  Related to this matter of work-life balance in some ways but

distinctly different in other ways for the interviewees was the matter of time

management. In particular, this involved the structuring of ministry work time in such a

way that they were able to accomplish what needed to be done within the time they had

available. Newer Pastor 14 noted a relationship between this factor and the challenge of

work-life balance when they said, "Yeah, for me the biggest challenge was time

management. Realizing I don't want to, like, cast the church in a bad light, but they'll

take every bit of you if they can, if you let them."

Some interview subjects characterized this issue as simply trying to find a way to properly structure the use of their time in ministry. Some subjects (*e.g.*, Newer Pastor 3 and Newer Pastor 10) simply named "time management" as an issue where the help of a mentor was needed. Newer Pastor 3 further described it as: "When it comes to my actual, like, okay, here's my 40-hour work week; how do I plan that out?" And Newer Pastor 14 described how a mentor "was able to teach me… how to really work a schedule, to where you're not overloading yourself."

However, for some interview subjects, this challenge involved more than simply structuring time but discerning priorities and shaping the use of time so that the best or most important tasks get accomplished. Newer Pastor 11, for example, vividly described how significant this challenge was when they would be "just sitting in my office at times with my head in my hands, like, what do I do first? There's so many important things I have to do. Where do I start?" This pastor described the need to figure out how to determine the tasks that needed greatest attention: "But I just wasn't prepared for the amount of different things that would be on my plate…. I had to learn to navigate between what's important, what's urgent and say 'no' to the thing you know that are urgent but not important." Newer Pastor 7 also characterized this issue in light of the wise use of time: "There so much time in a day. But those hours and that time gets filled up really, really quickly with all the other things you have to do." Newer Pastor 3 concurred by noting that "you're trying to fill up this full-time work schedule, and you're trying to figure out how to use your time wisely."

**Conflict**.  Another of the most mentioned needs/challenges revolved around the theme of conflict. Sometimes this related to conflict between the pastor and people in the

congregation, other times with other staff members, pastors, or supervisors. In some cases, conflict was between people in the congregation that the pastor was being called upon to mediate. Altogether, twelve of the fifteen interview subjects mentioned conflict in one of these forms.

For several subjects, dealing with people was an unexpected discovery during these early years of ministry. Newer Pastor 8 noted that for them ministry had been marked by a stronger emphasis on dealing with people than other tasks: "…you put so much energy into just, like, managing people… just a lot less wrestling with the Scriptures, and a lot more wrestling with people." Newer Pastor 2 described a similar discovery by noting that "people are a lot harder to handle than I had expected…. Dealing with people has been extremely, like, way more difficult." For some, dealing with people was experienced as a bit more complicated because it is framed by their ecclesiology; this was not simply conflict but conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ. Newer Pastor 4 described this tension in these terms: "And that's been one of the hardest things because I'm, like, okay, we call ourselves a church. But then people aren't all Christians, or some people claim to be Christians, but are living completely contrary to the Bible. And what do we do with that?" New Pastor 11 also felt this struggle: "It's like, this is a brother in Christ or a sister in Christ. And you know, that's kind of hard to navigate. How do I handle a relationship with a co-worker where it's a brother or a sister?"

For those involved in some form of youth ministry by position, this challenge was especially true of dealing with parents of the students. Newer Pastor 7 specifically identified the need for help on "how to handle parents." Newer Pastor also described the issue of "dealing with angry parents and dealing with students doing things that they

shouldn't do or should do." Newer Pastor 7 found this to be an issue as well, noting that something "I just wasn't necessarily prepared for was how to handle an irate parent."

One subtheme of conflict that was so prominent in the interview responses that it could almost be a category unto itself was the issue of conflict with other members of the church staff team. For some, this conflict was simply interpersonal conflict over differences. For another, this conflict specifically related to scheduling matters, especially as scheduling reveals higher values or emphasis for certain ministries in the church. Newer Pastor 1 acknowledged "there becomes a tension of who gets priority in certain areas… and scheduling conflicts are huge." Newer Pastor 4 described "dissension" within the staff team that was created over differences in the implementation of policy and whether policy prescriptions could be ignored.

Especially prominent within this subtheme of staff conflict was tension in the relationship with a pastoral supervisor. At least three interview subjects described experiencing acute reprimand from supervisors. Newer Pastor 6, for example, described a meeting in which they received substantial rebuke about perceived inadequate job performance that had a substantial effect on self-confidence and even led to wrestling with whether the pastor was authentically called to ministry: "This meeting [with other staff] just broke me." Newer Pastor 2 experienced a rather tense relationship with the senior pastor who habitually called out staff members for perceived poor work performance: "And when somebody did something wrong, or I did something that he didn't agree with, it would be, like, an hour-long session of scolding." In this case, Newer Pastor 2 also had questions about whether to stay in the pastoral role or resign and move on. Newer Pastor 15 described a moment that especially strained the relationship with a

supervisor: "I was basically yelled at saying that I was disrespecting him and his time, and like, that wasn't, I should have never asked for that… And so, he yelled at me. Um, yeah. I don't remember everything…. I was, like, in shock when it was happening. But, um, for, like, a solid four minutes. It was, like, straight being yelled at."

A smaller subtheme regarding conflict involved encounters with strong convictions about tradition by people in the church. Four of the newer pastor interviewees expressed their need for guidance in navigating tradition. Newer Pastor 1 expressed surprise at "how much tradition plays into how everything operates." Not surprisingly, this factor seemed especially dependent on the particular church context in which a subject was serving. For Newer Pastor 9, tradition was just a manner of minor details about expectations at that particular church, noting that "I learned which closets you can't use here" and described how there was an unwritten rule that staff there do not use the tablecloths in the women's ministry closet. For Newer Pastor 2, tradition was experienced more in the ongoing, often implicit contrasts between what this pastor was doing and what their predecessor had done: "That's not how they've done it in the past." For Newer Pastor 9, the church culture, described as "very old, very traditional," contained a much stronger commitment to tradition. This subject discussed issues and conflict with tradition more than any of the others and often used language that was more vivid and more confrontational. "People can control tradition," Newer Pastor 9 said, "They created it. They own it. They have, like, possession of it, and they defend it fiercely." This subject noted how when they started ministry, they expected people to have concerns about the degree to which the preaching was sound in its doctrine but found that much more

concern existed for where the pastor had put the American flag or the "60-year-old banner" that used to hang in the sanctuary.

An additional, and in some ways related, subtheme of conflict for some interview subjects were generational issues. Seven of fifteen interviewees referenced generational issues as a part of their experience. For some, this was more of a feeling of awkwardness or something that needed to be "figured out." Newer Pastor 13, for example, raised that as one of the questions they needed to wrestle with: "How do you lead older people? …Like, how do I sit with a small group leader that's been here for nine years serving under this ministry? And I'm coming in as the new high school youth pastor, and like, coach them? How do I best coach them at the age that I'm at and try to lead up?" For Newer Pastor 11, an awareness of this awkwardness existed but so did the recognition that the people of the church showed some patience: "…because the church I'm a part of is a very gracious church, and the people, they're really quick to forgive. Really great to understand that, hey, you're young. You're still figuring this out. We'll give you the benefit of the doubt."

For two interview subjects, this generational issue was a point of substantial tension and conflict. Newer Pastor 8 felt this with people of the congregation: "Initially my age was the biggest problem. So there were people in the church who have been in the church for 40-plus years, which is significantly longer than I've been alive. And they just got it in their minds from the very beginning, regardless of anything that I did, that I was unfit to lead as a senior pastor because of my young age." Newer Pastor 2 also voiced experiencing this tension with people of the congregation, saying that "most of the older generation doesn't particularly care for me." This interviewee, who served in an

associate role, also described experiencing this even more acutely with other pastoral

staff members: "My age has been brought up several times… I'm the youngest staff

member by probably 20 years, and so a lot of my ideas or suggestions are shut down

because I haven't been in ministry as long as everybody else."

**Messiness of Ministry**. More than half of the

interview subjects described facing challenges of

encountering problems and issues that were complex,

had significant consequences, involved high levels of

emotional trauma, and were unexpected or at least not

problems they had been exposed to in volunteer or

internship ministry experiences. Several subjects

actually used words like "mess," "messy," or

"messiness" to describe their experiences. Newer

Pastor 5, for example, stated: "There's just a lot of

messy moments within ministry, of dealing with even

things like legal things with abuse and stuff." Newer

| **Table 4.1** **Descriptions of** **"Messiness" of Ministry** |
|---|
| "It was all a huge mess" |
| "a lot of messy moments in ministry." |
| "the whole thing was just a giant mess." |
| "because people are difficult and messy" |
| "church is messy" |
| "how they got divorced was like a huge mess" |
| "how messy people are" |
| "other people in the congregation can be really messy" |

Pastor 14 used similar vocabulary: "People are messy.

And when you're working in ministry, you will get to see the dark side of people,

sometimes including myself." Encountering such "messiness" in some cases impacts the

pastor. "…It affected me emotionally," said Newer Pastor 11, "because I had to navigate

and figure out, you know, church is messy because people have a sin nature."

The issues identified as "messy" and experienced by these newer pastors included

suicidal threats, sexual abuse, drunkenness, divorce, drugs, depression, anger, conflict,

church politics, gossip, lying, being arrested, and encounters with the demonic. A number of these issues were identified by multiple interview subjects. Often these situations were described as "messy" not only because of the consequences (*e.g.*, sexual abuse, prison, drug addiction) but also for the high levels of emotion that they elicited for all involved, for the need to exercise wise discernment, and often for the surprising nature of their presentation.

Especially significant in the interview responses on this topic was the unexpected nature of many of these situations (i.e., the element of surprise) and the fact that the pastors had often not encountered them earlier. Newer Pastor 13, for example, acknowledged that "I just was unaware of even maybe problems the whole church doesn't know about, or just even certain circumstances with students or things, hard things in ministry that happen… And so, I went into it thinking, oh, probably things I won't face, being too naïve, too optimistic." Newer Pastor 11 also voiced surprise at this kind of experience: "…and in that moment I realized that ministry is a lot more difficult than what I expected." For Newer Pastor 6, such a situation was also marked by a feeling of being unprepared and needing the guidance of someone with experience: "I remember being, like, I have no idea what to say here. And this isn't something like we were taught in school."

Newer Pastor 14 described a specific situation that was almost shocking in the element of surprise:

> I took a guy in [as a volunteer in ministry], and he was young and wanted so badly – like he was zealous, like 'I want to serve the Lord,' etc., etc., And come to find out he's living a lie. He was partying all the time. One day he just didn't

show up. And I was like, 'What's happening?' And come to find out, he got arrested and was in jail. And this is not like, I don't know how I feel about this, and then come to find out even more, he was on drugs. And I was like, holy smokes, like I really got to vet these people, because this is serious.

**Administrative Details/Practices**.  Two-thirds of the interview subjects talked about the greater need for administrative prowess compared to their expectations transitioning from school to vocational ministry. Newer Pastor 6, for example, noted that "it's just the administration, the details, and even the business side of the church. I didn't fully realize until getting into the depths of it." Newer Pastor 5 described a similar observation: "And a lot of times that actually takes more administrative responsibility." This subject went on to describe their role as "more of a CEO role" than they had anticipated, and added, "…but I realized in order to, like, run an effective ministry, you need a lot of organization and a lot of administration." Several subjects described this unexpected element of administration. Newer Pastor 11 used words like "discovery" to describe this. For a couple of the subjects, the greater-than-expected demands of administrative work resulted in reasonably substantial impacts on their mindset, causing them to use the word "overwhelming." For example, Newer Pastor 6 said, "I also just didn't think about all the little things that it takes to do ministry… it's like, wow! I am just overwhelmed with details." Newer Pastor 2 described a similar experience in their early years of ministry: "…but it's been so much administration stuff. It's a bit overwhelming." Newer Pastor 14 described recognizing how critical addressing this challenge was going to be for them: "If you're not very detail-oriented, I can see where it would kind of come crumbling down pretty quick."

A subtheme in this category that emerged in the interviews were administrative details related to budgeting and accounting procedures in the church. Four of the fifteen interviewees specifically mentioned this challenge as something with which a mentor could be helpful. For Newer Pastor 13, this challenge was an unexpected and perhaps undesirable aspect of ministry: "I'm like, listen, I love Jesus and what students know about Jesus. Nobody told me that I was gonna have to use an Excel spreadsheet to work through all this budget and stuff." And for Newer Pastor 14, this challenge was more than an annoyance but a source of anxiety: "The first budget meeting I ever had, I was way in over my head. I was like, I don't know what I'm doing…. The budget is a scary thing to me because you print out this piece of paper, and it's like a ton of lines. And I have no idea what it is. I need all the help I can get because it's something that you don't want to mess up…."

**Ministry Context/Contextualization**.  When asked about challenges they had faced in those early years of ministry about which the counsel of a mentor would be helpful, seven of the fifteen interview subjects specifically referred to some aspect of learning their ministry context or adapting ministry practices to that context for greater effectiveness. Newer Pastor 11 voiced surprise at how challenging this had proven to be, saying "I wasn't prepared for how long I'd have to wait until I understood the heartbeat of the church where I was working." Newer Pastor 4 also acknowledged the challenge of this factor, saying, "…there's so many things that I do not understand about this community." Yet many interviewees described their desire to do this well. Newer Pastor 3, for example, noted that "when you immerse yourself in the context, you sort of want to talk to people [mentors] that are in that context, too."

This theme of context/contextualization emerged from a wide variety of situations. Newer Pastor 10 described learning from a mentor about the ways in which the history of that specific local church was impacting current ministry as well as how key elements of the culture of the community impacted ministry practice. Newer Pastor 14 also described ways the "blue collar community culture" shaped ministry decisions. In fact, Newer Pastor 14 provided a specific example when this discovery first came to their attention: "It was, like, my second or third youth group, and I went up to this student, and I said, 'Hey, what's your name?" Like, I forgot his name. And he looks at me and goes, 'My name is [NAME]. And around here we don't forget people's names.' And then he walked away. I was like… I'm gonna learn everyone's names because that means a lot here [at this church]." And Newer Pastor 12 talked about how a mentor could be helpful with a situation in which it had been "challenging to figure out how do I preach to this context?"

**Women in Ministry**.  Four of the fifteen interview subjects were women and of these subjects, two specifically voiced encountering issues related to attitudes toward women serving in ministry. Though the men obviously did not experience this as an obstacle or challenge to their ministry, for some of the women, women in ministry was a very significant issue. One of those interviewees described experiencing meaningful support from other staff members, but, nonetheless, encountering some issues with youth in her sphere of ministry. One of these female pastors noted: "And I remember hearing, like, some of the boys even in the youth group being, like, women can't teach." Such overheard comments have an impact on her practice of ministry. She said, given such recognition, "when I go up there, like, uh, do my words even mean anything, because

they are looking at my gender and not even hearing from the Spirit?" Regarding

questions from other pastors serving on a licensing/ordination committee, this pastor also

said that "people in the licensing process, like, they're constantly feeling the need to

remind me, like, hey, just so you know, like, women can't be head pastors of a church."

Even with a staff team that she experienced as supportive, this pastor described what she

described as "blind spots." For example, she discussed how often other staff members

"don't call me by my name. I'm [HUSBAND'S NAME]'s wife." She went on to say that

"I know they love and support us [women], but it's just, we are often, like, forgotten."

Another of the female pastors voiced encountering significant challenges

regarding her sex and involvement in ministry, particularly about being limited to only

certain types of work in the church context. "This is a highly complementarian church,"

she said, "And so they definitely, like, that's what you come in as, when you're a woman,

you come in as an admin." Women being in ministry was an area in which she said a

mentor could have been especially helpful given that this was radically different from

what she had experienced during her collegiate setting: "To go from an environment

where you're encouraged constantly, they – like, all the professors – I felt very much,

like, they believed in what I could do, and all of that, and then to be thrown into an

environment where it's, like, they didn't even ask me to volunteer at the church…" She

went on to say that "I didn't realize how much I was going to have to fight to be able to

do what I wanted, like, to use my gifts, and all that. I did not realize how difficult that

was going to be."

**Minor Themes – Newer Pastor Interviews**

A couple of additional themes that emerged are worth noting given their ties to this issue of transition to vocational ministry though they were mentioned by fewer subjects that those described above.

**Loneliness/Isolation**. Four of the fifteen interviews described feeling alone and without the help or engagement of others at times in those early years of ministry. This feeling was especially acute for Newer Pastor 3 who, for example, noted that "the loneliness was something that I don't know if I was necessarily prepared for." Newer Pastor 7 said that for them and their spouse, the loneliness was like they were "on an island," going on to say that "it was really hard to walk that alone." For Newer Pastor 13, having a mentor who could "communicate their heart, like, we're with you in this. Like, you're not alone in this" was helpful.

**Theory/Practice**. In addition, four of the fifteen interview subjects described the challenge of adapting theoretical concepts (learned in an academic setting) to ministry practice in a specific setting. As voiced by these pastors, this challenge was distinct from the interest in contextualization of ministry practices noted earlier. This issue involved application of principles, something Newer Pastor 3 described as "bridging a gap." For example, Newer Pastor 10 described the challenge this way: "So I feel like the [academic] preparation was great, the equipment to kind of think through things. But then just remembering that when we get in different areas and settings, it adjusts and sometimes can completely turn over." Newer Pastor 11 also described the challenge of this issue of application: "And that was tricky. It was tricky because there is a lot of difference between what I got in my education and what it looked like practically."

**Themes – Newer Pastor Focus Group**

Data from the Newer Pastor Focus Group showed convergence with several of the primary themes that had emerged in the interviews.

**Work-Life Balance**.  Three of the five newer pastors in the Newer Pastors Focus Group specifically described work-life balance as one of the challenges they faced in those early years of ministry where a mentor either was or could have been helpful. Newer Pastor 20 described finding a healthy balance between ministry work and personal life as "one of the biggest challenges" they faced in those early years of ministry. Newer Pastor 19 agreed that this was a challenge for them as well, particularly since they are bi-vocational. "I basically work two full-time jobs," this subject said, adding that this made finding that balance all the more important but also particularly difficult. Newer Pastor 18 concurred, describing the need to establish healthy weekly rhythms as especially important. Much like some of the interview subjects, the amount of work that needed to be accomplished was at times a barrier to finding a healthy work-life balance. "My first few months," this pastor recalled, "it was pretty easy for me to stay, like, you know, an hour, two hours, three hours past, like, our office hours because I felt like I had so much I needed to do."

Especially interesting in the descriptions of finding this work-life balance were the images employed by focus group participants to capture this experience. For example, Newer Pastor 19 used the word "wrestling" to describe a continuing tension over time in working out the ways to make this work for their ministry situation. Newer Pastor 20 described this experience with the metaphor of a sponge to describe the depletion in what one has to offer when a pastor fails to find that work-life balance. "And in the sponge

being wrung, so to speak," said this pastor, "as people in ministry, you're gonna have

people in crisis, people who are hurting and broken, coming to you, and they will draw

from you. And it's not a bad thing. I think that balance was… the most difficult thing—

work, life, personal, family, ministry. It was tricky. It wasn't always easy."

**Time Management**.  The pastors in the Newer Pastor Focus Group did not

mention this theme much at all. Newer Pastor 17 made a passing reference to this in

wrapping up the discussion of the role that administrative work played in their experience

vis-à-vis other categories of work (e.g., pastoral care, preaching, etc.).

**Conflict**.  As with the subjects in the personal interviews, conflict emerged as a

significant theme in the discussion by the Newer Pastor Focus Group. Two of the

participants specifically described conflict as an issue and provided examples. Nonverbal

responses by the other participants revealed agreement about this. Both pastors who

discussed this challenge described it specifically as conflict between people in the church

congregation, and both specifically address the reason why a mentor was helpful for a

challenge like this. As Newer Pastor 17 put it, "It's kind of awkward to talk about

someone in the church with people from the church, right? And so, it's nice to have an

outside voice, like, you can be a little more unfiltered, right?" Newer Pastor 16 described

a specific situation of conflict with a member of the congregation. This pastor wanted to

respond in the situation in a highly confrontational manner, justifying the decisions that

the church staff and volunteers had made. However, a mentor provided a fuller

perspective and helped them discover that the real issue was different from the presenting

issue. Thus, Newer Pastor 16 concluded, "It helped me address the issue in a lot healthier

way, versus, like, let's put on the boxing gloves and let's go. …We were able to get to

more of the heart of the issue. And we were able to resolve the conflict a lot better because of that."

Unlike several of the responses of the interview subjects, generational issues did not emerge as a specific sub-theme of the Newer Pastor Focus Group.

**Messiness of Ministry**.  Several pastors in the Newer Pastor Focus Group referred to this as a challenge in the early years of ministry but without using the specific terminology "messy" as did several of the interview subjects. Newer Pastor 20 alluded to this as particularly personally draining for a pastor in their discussion of the need for finding work-life balance. Newer Pastor 19 mentioned this in describing the need to find ways to process and manage one's emotions in response to what one is experiencing in doing the work of ministry. Newer Pastor 17 described this challenge with quite a bit of detail. For this pastor, this challenge was particularly influenced by the urban context in which they worked in ministry. "And yet there's, like," Newer Pastor 17 said, "the reality of life in the city. And yeah, there's been a number of, like, really difficult situations of, like, I don't how to respond to this right. I don't know that there is a right or wrong response. But it's, like, what feels true to the way of Jesus." Some of these situations included dealing with a break-in at the church building and helping people who had temporarily stayed with this pastor's family because of difficult problems navigate systems for the provision of services (*e.g.*, needing documentation at one place to receive help but then needing different documentation at another place in order to get that documentation, as described by this pastor).

**Administrative Details/Practices**.  Consonant with one of the themes in the interviews, three of the five participants in the Newer Pastor Focus Group specifically

discussed the fact that administrative work made up a larger (and, in some ways, a more important) proportion of their overall workload than they had expected when entering ministry. Newer Pastor 17 stated: "…the administration. I think the admin side is a lot higher than I would have thought." This pastor went on to describe "a lot of random day-to-day stuff" that ends up needing their attention or time. Newer Pastor 16 used the example of "forms that I had no idea you had to fill out" and how a mentor was helpful in figuring out how to incorporate the completion of that form into a regular ministry routine.

For pastors in the personal interviews, the administrative details were a challenge for those who worked at both larger and smaller churches but for different reasons. At larger churches, the challenge was a matter of scale. With larger groups of people, substantially more administrative details exist that need to be managed. For pastors of smaller churches, administrative details were a challenge because there might be only one pastor or staff member. This matter of administration was a strong tension for pastors in the Newer Pastor Focus Group largely because four of the five were serving in smaller congregations. Some subjects specifically named that as a source of this challenge and went on to describe the reality was that a pastor in that setting had to serve many different roles. Newer Pastor 16 said, "And I feel like that one thing I didn't realize in college is how many hats you got to wear." Newer Pastor 19 concurred, using similar language of "multiple hats." The myriad administrative details that required attention were a significant part of those "many hats."

**Loneliness/Isolation**.  While not mentioned by many of the subjects in the Newer Pastor Focus Group, this issue of loneliness in those early months and years of ministry

was especially acute for one. Newer Pastor 19 found this to be one of the more challenging aspects of that first ministry placement. "So, I live on my own," they said, "I am a single adult. And so, like moving to a new city and a new environment and not knowing people was tricky." And then they continued, specifically employing the language of loneliness: "…there's been a lot of times where either I felt alone, or I've been alone. Having that mentor, you know, who I can talk to and I can feel open with is really important," especially since in their case, no one else was there to share in such conversation.

Unlike the Newer Pastor Interviews, the themes of ministry context/contextualization, theory/practice, and women in ministry did not emerge in the discussion in the Newer Pastor Focus Group. The focus group did have a female member, but she did not mention this as an issue that she had encountered.

**Themes – Experienced Pastor Focus Group**

Data from the Experienced Pastor Focus Group shows some commonality with some of the themes described above but also provide a couple of new emphases. Some clear connection exists with themes like work-life balance, ministry context/contextualization, and women in ministry. These pastors looking back at a different time and from the perspective of the long-term ministry experience also provided a glimpse at several significant potential challenges.

**Work-Life Balance**.  One of the focus group participants spoke extensively about this theme in describing one of the significant challenges they faced in those early years of vocational ministry. Experienced Pastor 4 especially emphasized the issue of healthy boundaries in life and ministry as not only an issue they faced, but also an issue on which

mentors were especially helpful. For this pastor, mentors "understood what healthy boundaries were. And they helped me to learn healthy boundaries." These boundaries were essential across a broad spectrum of life experience: "physical, spiritual, and emotional." Experienced Pastor 4 recognized the unique ways in which ministry can be draining to a point of harm if such boundaries are not in place: "Within the context of ministry, as you all probably have had happen, there are people that can set us into a vortex of their drama and their stuff and their needs. And if we don't have healthy boundaries, we will get caught up in all of that and lose ourselves in many ways."

**Ministry Context/Contextualization**.  Consonant with some of the responses of other subjects in the interviews, one of the experienced pastors described this issue of better understanding the context in which they were serving and especially how to adapt their ministry work to most effectively serve people in that context. This challenge was an especially acute issue for Experienced Pastor 3 who was serving in very different context from that in which they had been raised: "So in my setting, coming from rural northern Indiana into the inner city, not rural at all, situation, to have somebody that knew something about the particular issues dealing with poverty, or dealing with justice or equity issues, racism and how that affects ministry, those types of things would have been helpful." This subject provided further nuance, noting that within such a setting "where resources are very limited, and needs are extensive" having the wise guidance of a mentor with regard to how to most effectively serve as a pastor and lead a church would be particularly helpful.

**Women in Ministry**.  One female participated in the Experienced Pastor Focus Group and, much like several of the other female subjects in this research project,

described having encountered some significant obstacles serving in ministry as a woman. She noted that this was the case although "historically women have always been a part of ministry and affirmed in ministry," her denomination affirms women's leadership in ministry, and the senior pastor of the multisite church where she worked strongly supported her. She was clear that when she was selected to be the campus pastor at one of the sites for the church "the lead pastor was wonderful at explaining from the pulpit the history we have in affirming women." She acknowledged that "some people may actually have left the church because of that" [her appointment as a campus pastor]. She added that "that was really hard for me because I thought I was in a place where that would not be an issue, but it really did come up."

Interestingly, some key themes from the interviews did not emerge in the focus group discussion: time management, conflict, messiness of ministry, administrative details, loneliness/isolation, and theory/practice. That said, the focus group format offered a much shorter amount of time for any given participant to offer details of these types of challenges and likely limited the scope of such responses.

**Difficult Personal Struggles.** Of additional interest is that a new theme emerged in the focus group data that was described by four out of the five participants: difficult personal struggles. Subjects described instances in their experience where they faced substantial personal problems that were either debilitating or nearly so, not merely annoyances or mild difficulties. Experienced Pastor 3 simply mentioned going "through a lot of especially personal struggles" without describing the details of such experiences. Experienced Pastor 2 mentioned the value of having the help of a mentor as "a voice of reason in challenging times." This pastor went on to note that "in ministry, you know, a

lot of times we can kind of get caught up in our emotions surrounding a particular issue…

it's good to have somebody to help you off the proverbial edge of a cliff." Two other

participants provided a more detailed description of the specific kind of difficult personal

struggle they faced during which the support of a mentor was especially important.

Experienced Pastor 5 noted that this involved a "pretty major health crisis" that was

debilitating including an initial medical misdiagnosis and an eventual specialized surgery

that left them bedridden for twelve weeks and then preaching from a wheelchair for two

months. "So thankful," said this pastor, "for people that will walk with you through the

darkest moments of your life and ministry." Experienced Pastor 1 described their difficult

personal struggle as unexplained infertility for six years, a challenge that this pastor and

their spouse had to walk through for a prolonged period. In addition to this, the pastor

experienced "a season of extreme anxiety where I thought I was going to lose my mind."

The subject added that "to have a voice of reason that was constantly reassuring and

speaking truth" was especially helpful.

      Question 8 of the survey of CCCU professors invited open-ended responses on

this same matter of issues and challenges that Christian Ministries graduates face in their

first few years of vocational ministry. Ninety-three of the responses offered answers, and

the details offered in those answers varied widely. Several key themes emerged as

primary among those answers. Conflict garnered the most mentions with twenty

respondents (21.5 percent) specifically naming it. In some cases, this was mentioned

generally. In five of those cases, conflict with a senior pastor was specified as the

particular kind of conflict involved. The second most named issue was financial issues

for the pastor with thirteen respondents (14 percent) indicating such. Subjects described

this issue variously as financial stress, financial pressures, need for financial support, and the burden of substantial educational debt, at times saying that the pay offered for these pastoral positions was often significantly low. Also, with thirteen mentions (14 percent) was the challenge of securing a job in ministry. Two respondents who described this issue specifically mentioned the challenge of finding jobs for women in ministry, with one of those respondents simply saying that a "lack of jobs for women" exists. Loneliness or isolation in ministry was fourth most named issue

| Table 4.2 Issues Named by CCCU Professor Respondents (frequency, N=93) | |
| --- | --- |
| 20 (21.5%) | Conflict |
| 13 (14%) | Financial Issues |
| 13 (14%) | Securing Job |
| 12 (12.9%) | Loneliness |
| 10 (10.8%) | Work-Life Balance |
| 7 (7.5%) | Theory/Practice |
| 6 (6.5%) | Disappointed Idealism |
| 6 (6.5%) | Finding Right Match |
| 5 (5.4%) | Administrative Details |
| 5 (5.4%) | Time Management |
| 3 (3.2%) | Generational Issues |
| 2 (3.2%) | Unhealthy Church Context |

with twelve respondents (12.9 percent) including it in their answer. Various factors were described as characteristic of this experience for new pastors, including working in a church that has few people their age, loss of the close friendships and/or community life in the collegiate setting, and the isolation that often comes with the role as leader in a church. Finally, the issue of work-life balance was named by ten respondents (10.8 percent) as a challenge for new pastors as well. In addition to those specific words (work-life balance), descriptions of this issue included phrases like avoiding burnout, setting/observing boundaries, and giving attention to self-care and personal devotional life.

While those five themes clearly stood out in the survey, a few other themes garnered meaningful attention. These included in order of diminishing frequency:

*theory/practice*, disappointed idealism, finding right match of job/church, *administrative details/practices, time management, generational issues*, unhealthy/dysfunctional church contexts, and traditionalism. (Issues in italics are consonant with the data from the personal interviews and focus groups.) Notable here was the issue of disappointed expectations of pastors as they encounter real world ministry that is radically and negatively different from their idealistic expectations. This contribution is not already highlighted from the interviews and focus groups.

In summary, the responses of subjects in this study revealed several key clusters of themes regarding issues and challenges that they face about which the counsel of a mentor was perceived as especially valuable. One set of major themes clustered around the matters of life, time, and tasks, more specifically, managing work-life balance, managing one's work time to accomplish ministry tasks effectively and efficiently, and addressing the unexpectedly larger proportion of time given to administrative tasks. Another set of themes clustered around the issue of the complexity of human relationships. This set included what several subjects labeled the "messiness of ministry" and referred to matters where sinful behavior and attitudes impacted not only an individual but had implications or consequences for others around them (and often the ministry of the church/organization). Another theme in this cluster was conflict in a wide variety of relationships. This theme figured prominently in many of the subjects' responses. A final cluster of themes featured matters of adaptation, specifically, the application of theory/theology to ministry practice and the contextualization of ministry practice in the specific setting where the pastor was serving. For the subjects who were female, the tensions and resistance they experienced regarding perspectives on women in

ministry were particularly significant. In addition to these major themes, a minor theme

of loneliness and isolation also emerged in the data.

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**Research Question #2:  Description of Evidence**

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**What mentoring practices have most effectively helped new pastors with**

**those needs and challenges?**

The data to answer this question was collected through the Newer Pastor Interviews, the

Newer Pastor Focus Group, and the Experienced Pastor Focus Group. Questions 6-8 of

the Newer Pastor interviews explored the ways that mentoring practices were both

helpful and counterproductive to mentees. Likewise, questions 6-7 of the Newer Pastor

Focus Group asked about what mentoring practices were helpful in addressing the needs

and challenges faced in that context of transition. Question 8 invited participants to

identify what they perceive to be ideal mentoring practices. Questions 4-5 of the

Experienced Pastor Focus Group invited reflection on mentoring practices that

participants found helpful. Question 6 asked about practices that participants have found

effective in mentoring others. As with the Newer Pastor Focus Group, question 8

addressed perceived ideal mentoring practices.

**Major Themes – Newer Pastor Interviews**

Several themes emerged in the Newer Pastor Interviews regarding mentoring

practices that new pastors found to be especially helpful or effective from the perspective

of the one being mentored.

**Utilizing Experience**.  Nine of the fifteen new pastors who were interviewed

described the importance of a mentor's experience. This characteristic was something

that made a relationship with a mentor in ministry different from simply a friendship with

a peer and also helpful in contributing to their understanding and practice of ministry. For some, experience simply marked this person as being able to identify with what a mentee is going through. Newer Pastor 2 mentioned that their mentor has "been in leadership and training pastors for years. So, like, he's done this. And I think that, that opens up, like, me to being corrected because he's already heard this before. He's been through this, and he's seen both outcomes." Newer Pastor 4 discussed the importance of a mentor having "a lot of life experiences that have variety" and being "farther along in life than me." Newer Pastor 3 also found this sense of identification helpful: "So to be able to just openly talk about the struggles that I was having with all those different areas with someone that had done those things before was very, very impactful for me." A certain confidence exists that comes through that identification. Newer Pastor 12 emphasized the importance of having a mentor who has "had a lot of experience." Describing this in almost incarnational terms, they added that "when I'm with him, there's just this sense of being in capable hands. You know, I think that a sense that God kind of gives through people. You're in capable hands here, in My [God's] hands. And so, He sends people to help you understand that a bit better." That "feeling" that is borne from a mentor's experience, as this pastor described it, was especially important: "And that's what I've gotten in a mentor of mine. You know they often say you don't remember the things that they'll say, but you remember the way they made you feel."

For some of the newer pastors in this study, the past experience of the mentor was viewed as a resource. Past experience could provide information and counsel that was, to some degree, proven to work or to be helpful. Newer Pastor 12, for example, described the importance of having a mentor who was "somebody that I can actually feel

comfortable asking these questions, because I know he's experienced. I know he's

probably got an answer. I know he's a capable person for this." Newer pastors described

learning not only from a mentor's accomplishments but also from their mistakes. Newer

Pastor 14 noted the value of this: "And so, when he tells a story of his past, either a

success or a failure, it helps me learn, like, don't do that." Newer Pastor 11 expressed a

similar sentiment, saying that the mentor "would explain to me his mistakes, the mistakes

he made, the things, like, the horror stories of his experiences with youth ministry that

helped me see when I have a horror story of youth ministry, that's okay."

**Establishing Trust and Safety**. Not surprisingly, another significant theme that

emerged from the interviews is establishing trust in the relationship such that it is viewed

as "safe space" for candid and vulnerable conversation. Newer Pastor 8 noted that their

mentor "…established very clearly that he's a person I can trust." Newer Pastor 4 also

said of their mentor: "We have a level of trust with each other. She knows that I respect

her so much as, like, a person of color, as just a human being, as my sister in Christ. And

so we can have candid conversations." Newer Pastor 13 said, "I've learned even in my

choice of mentor, that's important, and who I choose to trust this or that stuff." A similar

sentiment is seen in the comments of Newer Pastor 14: "But he's also just, like, he's a

friend, too. He's a friend so I can be honest and vulnerable with him. And I know that

he's not going to stab me in the back or whatever. So, like, I trust him. He built trust with

me…. I can bring him the really hard stuff." Others used the language of safety to

describe the quality of the relationship with their mentor and the possibilities trust opened

up for conversation. Newer Pastor 6 noticed the "spiritual gift of hospitality" in their

mentor, describing it as something that was "making me feel like I'm safe, and I'm

okay." They went on to say that this was "crucial" in the effectiveness of that

developmental relationship."

In some cases, this trust was built by the sharing of sensitive or intimate elements

from their own life or experience. Newer Pastor 6, for example, said that "somebody

who's safe is somebody that also brings me into their life as well." They added, "I don't

think that I would like a mentor that was really shut off about their own personal life."

For Newer Pastor 4, the fact that their mentor would explain the reasons why she said or

did certain things helped develop trust: "And, like, after she would explain things to me,

I'd be like, oh, and it would help me to trust her decision. So, every time she, like,

explained it to me I learned, oh, I can trust you."

An even more specific expression of this theme came in the emphasis on

confidentiality with what was shared with at least one of the interviewees describing a

situation where the lack of respect for confidentiality by a mentor caused significant

harm. Newer Pastor 11 noted that "when you're having conversations with mentors, it

should be confidential. I think that's incredibly important." Newer Pastor 6 felt injured by

a mentor who failed to keep intimate information within the relationship: "It made me

think of when I didn't feel safe, and I had a mentor who actually shared a lot of what I

would talk about with them to other people. And I knew about it because it got back to

me. That was just like, wow! So that would be a huge thing, just an unsafe place,

disclosing information, so that was hard."

**Active Listening**.  Another significant theme that emerged in the data from the

personal interviews was the practice of active, engaged listening. Nine of the fifteen

interview subjects specifically described the importance of their mentor's work in

listening to them. Newer Pastor 4 emphasized that their mentor is "a really good listener."

Newer Pastor 3 identified "their willingness to listen" as very important in their mentor:

"It's really easy to get lost in the struggles sometimes of vocational ministry, and to have

a listening ear is huge." Newer Pastor 15 said, "But I've consistently had people that

were really good listeners and really good at asking questions." Newer Pastor 14

described their frustration with times when their mentor did not seem to be fully engaged:

"There have been times—it doesn't happen all the time—where we're sitting face-to-

face, and then the phone comes out. And I'm, like, are you listening?"

Some of the newer pastors provided further insight into the ways in which

listening contributes to their growth and their ministry. In some cases, quality listening

provides an opportunity for a mentee to think through the issue or question they have by

talking it out. Newer Pastor 13 described this as very important for them in the

experience of mentoring: "And then when I think of a mentor, just somebody that, like,

just listens. I think it could have been so helpful for me, if within my first two years to

have somebody to just listen, for me to process some hard things." Newer Pastor 12 was

grateful for "just having that listening ear, to be affirmed, and just to talk, and even

answer my own questions." While several expressed appreciation for the advice and

counsel they often receive in conversations with their mentors, Newer Pastor 15 quipped

"like, we're not here to just get advice all the time." Often, simply listening was very

helpful.

**Providing Perspective**.  Nine of the fifteen interview subjects described the

importance of a mentor helping them gain a new and different perspective on the

challenging issue they were facing. In some cases, they used the language of being

enabled to see things differently. For Newer Pastor 7, this phenomenon was experienced

more generally in being helped to see a more balanced view of their life and ministry:

"It's really easy to hold on to those negatives because it's really easy to remember them.

Sometimes we keep track of the negatives but lose track of the positives. Having

somebody who would have just listened, I think it would have been super beneficial." For

several interviewees, this idea of perspective was described in an even more specific way.

For two of the subjects, this issue of perspective centered on providing a better

understanding of context. Newer Pastor 3 described ways in which their mentor helped

them better understand the geographical and community context: "So he was really great

at when there was something that he knew was sort of foreign to someone that wasn't in

[this community], he would make it a point to sort of explain it, or be like, this is why

people here care about this sort of thing…. So, he was really good at sort of

understanding sort of the iconic parts of [this community], and then bringing a more

fuller understanding of why those are important." For Newer Pastor 1, perspective was

given on the generational context of the church where they served. This pastor described

the helpfulness of "being challenged to understand the perspective of another

generation." In this case, their mentor "is very, very sensitive to an older generation and

to their needs, their wants, their preferences, everything." The mentor in this situation

was able to help the pastor better understand the generational sub-cultural context of the

church.

In some cases, the perspective provided was simply confirming the

reasonableness of a pastor's response to a situation. Newer Pastor 12 noted that

mentoring wasn't "necessarily telling someone what to do. It's saying, 'You're not

crazy.'" Newer Pastor 15 used similar language describing a mentor as "just somebody willing to listen and say that I'm not crazy." For Newer Pastor 1, the perspective they sought was more about clarifying their understanding of a circumstance, noting that it was helpful "also to have those people around who are able to give a second opinion. Am I off base on this? Am I misjudging the situation? That's huge, too." Newer Pastor 12 expressed a similar sentiment: "I just want to know that I'm on the right track, you know, that I'm not flying off the rails here. That's important, too. Sometimes you just can't see your blind spots. You need somebody else to look at it."

For pastors dealing with situations of conflict or disagreement, the perspective a mentor could provide was often the ability to see the matter through the eyes of the opposition. "They kind of guided me along," said Newer Pastor 6, "kind of giving me the perspective of the other side." In significant ways, this kind of practice helped subjects like Newer Pastor 6 look at the situation from outside their own emotional response: "…but they're helping me discover what the other side can be. And helping me maybe get my eyes off of myself and my hurt and feelings, which is valid, but help me to see, like, where are they coming from?" Newer Pastor 15 described a similar experience. For them the "good questions" that the mentor asked helped this pastor "dig a little deeper into things, that maybe I wasn't thinking about this perspective."

For four newer pastors in this study, having the help of a mentor who was external to the church or organization made their provision of perspective even more valuable. Newer Pastor 5 noted that having a mentor "that's like out of [the church] that can, like, give you perspective from an outside point of view" can be helpful. For Newer Pastor 2, this outside view offers a neutrality that they viewed as valuable: "He doesn't have a dog

in the fight. Like, he's not a member of our church. He has no relation to our church at all. And he's not gonna pick sides, even though he knows me and loves me. Yeah. He's able to kind of see it from an outside view." Yet the value is slightly different for Newer Pastor 12 who sees this external perspective as providing more of a protective and safe space. This pastor wants a mentor who is

> …someone I can openly and freely talk about issues I wouldn't necessarily talk with other people about. Especially, you know, those of your own congregation. Sometimes you want to be careful what you talk about. So being able to talk with someone who is removed from that context is really helpful and comforting and makes you feel like, you know, I can kind of open up about some of these anxieties I've had.

**Asking Questions**.  Eight of the fifteen subjects in the Newer Pastor Interviews identified the asking of insightful and thought-provoking questions as especially significant in their experience of mentoring. Often expressed in contrast to the giving of advice and counsel, this practice of asking questions to prompt thinking and process issues was considered very helpful. Newer Pastor 4 simply observed that their mentor "asks a lot of questions." The same was true for Newer Pastor 15 who said, "I've consistently had people who were really good listeners and really good at asking questions." For Newer Pastor 1, this question-asking assisted them in giving definition to important theological commitments. As this pastor indicated, a mentor was helpful by "not just telling you what to believe theologically, but to ask you questions to bring you in on a conversation that comes back and forth, to ask you a question." Newer Pastor 3 noted that the idea of inquiry was not the only helpful aspect, but more specifically the

questions needed to provoke thought: "… having mentors that will ask you tough questions that, like, make you actually contemplate about decisions that you make or about places you are in your personal life is really helpful. Not just that it's nice to have a listening ear, but it's also really helpful for a mentor to ask challenging questions for you." This pastor added that a mentor's challenging questions "ultimately helped us make a really big decision." Newer Pastor 8 recognized the value of such a practice in not merely providing counsel, but also helping a new pastor develop the capacity to think through such issues for themselves. "I think sometimes I wish he would directly tell me what to do," this pastor said. "And I think he senses that. But I know for a fact it's intentional what he's doing. He wants me to grow as a young minister. And you don't do that by having someone more experienced than you step in and just handle everything."

      **Practicing Honesty**.  More than half of the interview subjects also identified honesty as significant in their experience of mentoring. So crucial was such a practice that Newer Pastor 4 said, "I wouldn't want a mentor that I can't be honest with." For this pastor, the honesty of a mentor gave them permission to be very forthright and honest as well. "Also, if somebody I know is just really, really honest," they said, "Then I can be really, really honest with them." That kind of reciprocity in permission-giving was also the experience of Newer Pastor 11 who said, "Just seeing that authenticity helped me understand I can be authentic, too. And that's okay. I can mess up and make mistakes, and that's okay." Similarly, Newer Pastor 9 appreciated that their mentor "is an honest person, as in, he's not afraid to tell me when he's failed." Newer Pastor 12 expressed gratitude for that kind of transparency in describing their mentor who is "willing and

humble enough to say, 'Yes, I, yeah, I made some mistakes.' That's a leader you want to follow. He'll just say, 'I made some mistakes. And I was anxious here. But it's okay.'"

Beyond the sharing of their own experiences, this honesty was also valued when it came to the assessment of a mentee's performance or decisions. Newer Pastor 14 also said that "being honest" was very helpful in a mentor: "He's not going to appease me. He'll tell me when he feels like I need to, like, do something maybe differently. It doesn't have to be disciplinary. It's just honest. Like, hey man, let me give you an example, or just an honest evaluation." Newer Pastor 9 liked this as well. "He will tell me when something was done well," this pastor said. "And he will also tell me when something was not done so well, which is awesome." That said, such honest evaluation can be painful. Yet Newer Pastor 11 saw value even in that: "They have the privilege to approach me and call me out on it. And I know that it's from love, even if it hurts, even if it's a little constructive. That's okay." Given the "harder" nature of such honesty, for a couple of the newer pastor interviewees, linking this speaking of the truth with a degree of kindness was especially important, or what Newer Pastor 7 called a "balance of grace and truth." Recalling a particularly difficult interaction with their mentor, this subject recognized that "I think there's a lot of truth in what my mentor said. But it was hard for me to receive it because it didn't have a lot of grace with it. It was a hard truth. Not only was it truth. It was just hard. It was hard to receive. Yeah, so I think in a mentoring role, that speaking grace and truth is huge."

**Encouraging Generously**.  Seven of the fifteen interview subjects specifically named encouragement as an especially important practice in their experience of mentoring. Newer Pastor 6 identified this as true of many of their mentors: "Just overall,

broadly, every mentor with the constant encouragement, just, I think there just needs to be more encouragement in ministry. So that has just been, like, really helpful, encouragement, affirmation all across the board with my mentors." Several interviewees saw a critical need for encouragement because of the many challenges that ministry presents. For example, Newer Pastor 3 noted their appreciation for "just the positivity that a mentorship brings of just someone that you feel like, really cares about you and is trying to build you up. Because there's a lot of voices in ministry that are negative. So, encouragement is also very helpful." For Newer Pastor 5, such encouragement was valuable in moments when their diligent efforts had not succeeded. For them, the encouraging conversation of a mentor provided "just a place where it's, like, hey, this might have bombed out or this might not have, like, gone well, but, like, I appreciate your efforts. And this is, like, time to move forward, constant reassurance."

Of particular interest in the data for this theme was the significant role of encouragement that anchored affirmation to God's grace, work, and calling in the life of the mentee. Newer Pastor 5, for example, continued their explanation of encouragement by noting how their mentor, in those moments of coming up short, was able to point them to the fact that "you're in this position for a reason. You're here. God has appointed you here, and that's okay." Newer Pastor 11 said their mentors "always reassure me of my calling and of the place that God has put me. Like, hey, we see these things in you. This is really good. We can definitely assure you that the Lord has called you to this." Newer Pastor 6 spoke of the importance of their mentor "will just, like, affirm me and who I am as a child of Christ. And you know, she identifies just who I am and kind of brings me back to that." Such affirmation was especially important for this pastor when they were

feeling challenged at precisely that point: "…when they encouraged me, and affirmed me and who I was, and that was, like, a critical moment for me because I mean, I was just, like, down to questions, like, am I even supposed to be in ministry…. and then also guiding me back to the fact that my worth is not found in these other people's opinions or thoughts but found in the hands of God." Newer Pastor 12 voiced a similar experience when it comes to feeling those doubts. For that pastor, it "having those people as mentors to say from their experience, 'No, you don't know what you're doing. *God* knows what He's doing though. And He's proved Himself to be that. He's proved Himself time and again, that He's not going to just put you out there as a pastor to fail" was helpful.

**Availability**.  The availability of a mentor was theme in the responses of seven of the fifteen interview subjects. These interviewees valued mentors making themselves available whenever needed, not merely for a weekly or monthly "mentoring meeting." For Newer Pastor 2, this was one of the most important characteristics of a mentoring relationship: "The biggest thing is being available. I think, you know, people are so busy all the time now. But whenever I call upon these people who are in my life, they are there. That's the biggest thing they can to. For me, it's just to be available." Newer Pastor 3 used that same word "availability" in describing how it was "always nice to know that there's people in your life you can talk to, and that they'll be there for you." For this pastor, the mentors having "expressed that they were there if I needed anything" was important. Newer Pastor 8 expressed their appreciation that "the lines of communication are open any time I need help or counsel." This pastor has even tested that in some extremely difficult circumstances. In reflecting on that, the subject recalled that "sometimes, you know, this is really time sensitive. I don't know what to do. I'm totally

lost. It's 9 p.m. So, I sent him a text first. Hey, you know. I know it's late. I'm sorry. I preface it with all the apologies. Do you have a minute to talk? He always has a minute to talk. *Always*. It just, it's a priority for him to be available."

Several interview subjects described the importance of this out of their negative experiences with a mentor. Newer Pastor 6 told of a time when "I established a relationship and mentorship with this person, and after about a month they just stopped wanting to meet; trying to line up schedules just didn't work, and I eventually just gave up." For Newer Pastor 2, unavailability is not just a matter of annoyance but enables anxiety and distress to be magnified: "I think it comes down to the availability thing. Like, if I text you or call you, and I need to chat about this stuff, and I don't get a response for like two or three days, now I've had the opportunity to stew and build up more emotion about this thing." Of special interest in these descriptions was the fact that availability is about more than the mere logistics of meeting but also conveys something about the care that a mentor has for the mentee. "One of the biggest slaps in the face," said Newer Pastor 15, "is when they would continue to cancel all the time or be like 10 minutes late every single time because all that communicated was, like, you don't actually care to be here." For Newer Pastor 14, such a demonstration that "I'm not that important" was the message communicated when mentors had done this a few times. The question that was raised for them was "It's just kind of, like, do you care for me?"

**Following a Regular Schedule**.  For seven of the interview subjects, following a regular schedule of meeting together was also especially important. Often this was described as a weekly meeting, sometimes over coffee or a meal (e.g., lunch). One key element in this regular schedule for some subjects was the issue of consistency. Newer

Pastor 13 discussed the importance of "meeting with me consistently." Newer Pastor 15

said "there has to be some sort of consistency." And Newer Pastor 14 simply provided

emphasis by saying, "Be consistent, be consistent." For Newer Pastor 4, such consistency

was an indicator of intentionality in the relationship. For Newer Pastor 3, this consistency

provided a regular expectation and enabled the pastor to plan:

> It's always helpful for me when there's sort of a schedule with my mentor. That
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> way I can be thinking in advance of things, like, that I want to talk about, things
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> that I'd like to bring up. It's obviously nice when you can just make this sporadic
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> phone call. But having sort of a set schedule, like, for mentoring practices was, is
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> really helpful for me. And I look forward to that, to be able to just reflect and talk
>
> and things like that.

**Beyond Work to Personal Life**.  A final major theme that emerged from the

interview data was the discussion of matters beyond simply work performance or

ministry skills. Seven of the interview subjects identified the discussion of their personal

lives beyond work as very important to their mentoring experiences. Newer Pastor 14

appreciated that "we talk life. How am I doing? How am I doing spiritually? How am I

doing emotionally? Physically? How is my relationship with my spouse? And then we

talk business." Newer Pastor 5 has "always appreciated when mentors check in on family

life and things like that, and how our outside-of-work things are going. And that usually

comes up almost first." Newer Pastor 6 also emphasized the value of this: "I just have

had mentors, too, that have just constantly checked in with me on the personal level in

ministry. Like, not necessarily, like, in the job or what I'm doing at the church, but more

of just how am I doing? And that was very helpful." For Newer Pastor 13, this emphasis

on personal life wasn't separated from ministry performance but actually impacted it. "And to have somebody that cares about not just my work life but my personal life," this pastor said. "I think it would be just huge. Because my personal life within my first two years, like, affects my ministry, and, like, they kind of go hand in hand. And so, I have to be taking care of myself and my own personal life to be able to best lead and pour out as well."

Those were the major themes that emerged from the interview data. A trio of minor themes also seemed to carry some importance.

**Minor Themes - Newer Pastor Interviews**

**Avoiding Being Dismissive**.  Five of the interview subjects discussed the importance of mentors not automatically being dismissive of ideas, experiences, or responses of the mentees. This theme often came out of their negative experiences with a mentor. In some cases, this theme was a marker of a mentor who was simply closed to the idea of change. Newer Pastor 1, for example, said that "sometimes they say this is why we can't do this. But they're not correct. They're off base. Or they're comfortable where they're at. They're comfortable with things being the way they are." Newer Pastor 5 described a similar experience with mentors who "automatically shut down ideas." Newer Pastor 9 identified an "unwillingness to consider change." For all three of these subjects, the issue did not seem to be not getting their way but an *a priori* unwillingness to even have a discussion before eventually setting an idea aside. These kinds of experiences seemed to come up in discussions of a mentoring relationship internal to the organization.

Another form of this dismissiveness for two of the interview subjects seemed to center around being dismissive of the emotions or anxieties that the mentees were experiencing. Newer Pastor 2, for example, identified "dismissing problems as not important or less than they may seem" as a special frustration. "I've had that happen a couple of times," this pastor said. "Where I'm like, hey, this is, like, a big issue. Like, I know you're not here to see how big it is, but we really need to talk about it because it needs to be resolved. And I can't do anything about it." Newer Pastor 12 described a similar response when discussing mentoring behaviors that were unhelpful: "I'd say somebody who would, like, write off, some of the issues you've been having, like, say it's not really that important. I guess if somebody were to tell me that my anxieties about preaching were misplaced."

**Prayer**.  A second minor theme that emerged from the data was that of praying for the mentee both when the pair were together and also on a consistent basis when apart. In many cases, interview subjects did not provide in-depth explanation about the nature of this prayer but mentioned prayer as a valued mentoring behavior. Newer Pastor 8 described their mentor as "a powerful prayer warrior." Newer Pastor 2 described the result of the mentor's behaviors as a "prayer shield." Newer Pastor 4 saw the activity of praying together with their mentor as having an important side effect: "We pray together a lot. And that also builds trust." For Newer Pastor 12, the praying outside of their mentoring meetings was helpful. This pastor said their mentor "regularly reaches out. And I know he's praying for me because he *says* that he's praying for me. That's important to me."

**Not Seeking to Replicate Oneself**.  A final minor theme that emerged from the interviews, described by three of the pastors, was that of a mentor not merely trying to create replicas of themselves. Rather, the valued practice of these subjects was of intentionally seeking to develop the person as God had created and gifted them. Newer Pastor 12 expressed concern about mentors who are "just universalizing it in telling that advice to everyone" because such a practice "isn't really taking [into account] that specific, unique, God-designed person. And you're just saying they're like you. You're assuming they're like you, rather than taking them at their different pace, different life experiences. They have different passions, and that's good." Newer Pastor 11 expressed a similar sentiment in their experience:

> And the Lord has gifted me with passions and the gifts, and He's wired me in specific ways for ministry. It's going to look different for me than it will with another and trying to navigate that has been really beneficial. [My mentor] has been really helpful in that, that he doesn't try to mold me into his form of ministry, or what the glory years of his ministry experiences were like. It's my wiring, the Lord's doing it through me.

This emphasis has now shaped the mentoring work that Newer Pastor 5 does in the course of their ministry.

> I'm not trying to create little 'me's' of those people that I mentor… But at the end of the day, each person is their own person. And so, helping them to realize their own dreams and their own, like, specific skill sets, the God-given gifts that they have, in helping them create the best version of themselves rather than just create

little replicas of who I am. And now, that might look different. And that's a tough

balance to do because really you only know your experience.

Beyond these themes, several other mentoring practices received mention by a

subject or two: accountability, facilitating reflection on experience, helping apply

Scripture knowledge, modeling, taking a mentee along on a ministry task, discussing a

book together, and linking to helpful resources. A final point by Newer Pastor 10

identified a unique, but powerful result of this pastor's mentor, a sort of transference of

confidence: "[My mentor] has a confidence that I would say I probably don't. I don't

have a confidence like that. And so, I've noticed, not an insecurity to the point of, like, a

doubt of who I am. But I've definitely noticed times of insecurity and kind of what we're

doing or where we're going and a fear of, well, this might fail. So, let's just make it safe.

And so [my mentor's] confidence actually drops to me."

The data from the Newer Pastor Focus Group evidenced some of the same themes

that had emerged in the interviews:

**Themes – Newer Pastor Focus Group**

**Perspective**.  Three of the five newer pastors in the focus group described ways

in which a mentor was helping by providing elements of perspective that the pastor had

previously not seen. Newer Pastor 18, for example, specifically used the language of

perspective in describing what their mentor did, noting that "he just really challenged

that, his focus was on perspective for the whole situation." In this case, the perspective to

better understand why someone in this pastor's scope of ministry was responding in the

way they were was helpful. Newer Pastor 18 said that this had a very positive impact on

the situation: "And it just opened doors, opened doors to conversation and understanding.

So just the fact that my mentor challenged my perspective and opening my eyes to something greater, you know?" Newer Pastor 17 also found a mentor's assistance in broadening perspective to be helpful in a situation of conflict in their ministry. They described how their mentor "had mentioned of, like, being able to, like, peel back the layers and say, like, well maybe this is why they responded this way. Or this is why this was such a triggering thing for them."

**Availability**.  The importance of a mentor being available to a newer pastor both in regular meetings but outside of those gatherings also emerged from the data in the Newer Pastor Focus Group. Newer Pastor 19 called a mentor's time a "valuable commodity" and said that "it is important to take time" for a mentee. Newer Pastor 20 agreed that time is "one of the most valuable things we have" and developed that thought even more by saying that "being available" was essential: "Mentors that are available to talk, to text, over phone, to meet up even just for a moment and discuss something, something that maybe to you is a burden, a burden on your heart, something in your spirit that's needing to be expressed."

**Beyond Work to Personal Life**.  While not a prominent theme in the Newer Pastor Focus Group discussion, mention was made of the significance of a mentor demonstrating interest and care in elements outside of the work/ministry situation. In this case, Newer Pastor 19 said they have appreciated a mentor "who's willing to care more about your wellbeing as a Christian, a spiritual leader, as a person more than your position. And I've had that experience, it's been awesome!"

**Practicing Honesty**.  The theme of honesty in conversation was also evident in the data from the Newer Pastor Focus Group. Newer Pastor 18 expressed their desire for

a mentor "you can just be totally unfiltered with, and honest and raw. But then someone who takes that session of being unfiltered and creates a space for coaching, and just growth to happen." Much like the responses from the interviews, honest feedback from a mentor being expressed with grace was important to pastors. Newer Pastor 19 said: "And also, just willing to tell you the hard things, like not sugarcoating things. Just, like, saying the hard things, but knowing that that person, like, loves you."

**Avoiding Being Dismissive**.  The data from this focus group suggested that some subjects had also encountered frustrations with mentors who had been quickly dismissive of new ideas or suggestions for change. Newer Pastor 20 recognized that this was perhaps more of a by-product of a mentor's experience than willful: "It wasn't an intentional kind of stonewalling. But there was kind of a tight rein on creativity sometimes. The willingness to fail, I suppose, is kind of how I'd phrase it. To let people you are leading, or say, you know, it's okay for things not to work. But to try them and to be creative." Newer Pastor 18 described a similar experience, saying that "one thing that me and my mentor really had to walk through, was just allowing space to do things new or allow space for creativity. Just when promoting different ideas at first, they were pretty quickly shut down. Like, no. This is how we've always done it. So, we're gonna stick to that. It's a lot easier for us."

The data from the Experienced Pastor Focus Group also showed support for several major themes identified in the data from newer pastors: availability, beyond work to personal life, and prayer.

**Themes - Experienced Pastor Focus Group**

**Availability**.  Three of the five pastors in the Experienced Pastor Focus Group identified the availability of their mentor(s) as an especially important factor. Experienced Pastor 2 spoke to the importance of this factor for them: "And then also, the big one, too, is being available. Of, you know, the text message of 'Hey man, you know, did you have time to talk today? I got, I got something I need to deal with,' of them being able to have that space to make themselves available, I know has been really big for me." For Experienced Pastor 1, availability was evidence that the mentor genuinely cared about the mentee. "And my number one was being available…," this subject said. "I didn't want somebody that I felt like I was interrupting their time, or they were doing it out of obligation instead of doing it because they care, and they actually have a relationship with me." This element of availability was captured with the language of commitment in the description that Experienced Pastor 4 provided of their more negative experience with a mentor. "They take time," this pastor said. "I think it's really frustrating to start talking with somebody in terms of mentoring, and then they're either on the phone or you get cut off and say, sorry, gotta go. So, it really needs to be somebody who can commit to the time, and it doesn't need to be a long time every time to be committed to that person."

**Beyond Work to Personal Life**.  Two of the Experienced Pastors identified the importance of giving attention beyond the mentee's work practices to their personal life as highly valued in the mentoring experience. Experienced Pastor 3 stated that "another one for me was not only discussing the profession, but the person. So, what was deeply valuable to me was not only 'how's ministry going?' That's the easy question. But 'how

are you? How's the family doing?' So that, that question was much rarer, but for the good

interaction, that was present." The importance of this for Experienced Pastor 4 was a

perceived connection between the two, a link that they viewed as anchored in biblical

anthropology: "There's just a multi-layered facet of mentoring, both through ministry and

personal. Because it all goes together, you know? One isn't separate from the other. At

the end of the day, we bring ourselves to ministry and our ministry follows us, because

it's in us. Because that's how God created us."

**Prayer**.  Two of the experienced pastors specifically mentioned the importance of

prayer by their mentor as significant in their experience. Experienced Pastor 2 saw this as

expression of their mentor's action in not only providing counsel for work, but also

"being a spiritual mentor, being able to pray for you, to encourage you, to ask how it is

with your soul." Experienced Pastor 5 saw this as especially important when they were

going through very difficult circumstances, and they had a mentor who's "been down the

road a little bit further" who could acknowledge the difficulty and challenge them to

"hang in there, knowing that their prayers are carrying you thought."

In addition to these major themes, experienced pastors in this focus group

mentioned several of the previously described themes from the interviews and the Newer

Pastor Focus Group. Experienced Pastor 2 mentioned the importance of active listening.

Experienced Pastor 4 described the importance of establishing trust and emphasized the

importance of the conversation with the mentor being a "safe place." Experienced Pastors

3 and 4 both mentioned the importance of honesty in the relationship. Experienced Pastor

2 referred to the role that encouragement played in their mentoring experience.

Experienced Pastor 4 noted that questions played a key role and particularly emphasized

the importance of those questions being "well-placed," twice using that terminology to highlight that the quantity of such inquiries was not the key aspect, but rather the timing and relevance. None of the data from the Experienced Pastor Focus Group seemed to contradict that of the Newer Pastor Interviews or the Newer Pastor Focus Group. This focus group, however, did contribute two distinctive themes not previously mentioned by the newer pastors.

**Advocacy/Support**. This theme was seen in both positive and negative experiences with mentoring for three of the pastors in the Experienced Pastor Focus Group. For one subject, mentors could be helpful to a mentee by using their experience and influence to provide meaningful support with regard to their superiors. "Another [practice] was advocating," said Experienced Pastor 3. "So, if it was in a setting where I was underneath somebody, or had, you know, levels of authority over me, that they would take what we discussed and advocate for me to a structure that was above me. That was very valuable follow up." For other experienced pastors, the failure of a mentor to show support in difficult moments of conflict left them hurt and disappointed. Experienced Pastor 5 described a circumstance in which they were left facing an angry group of people in the church verbally attacking them "without any of Christ in the center of it." Particularly disappointing for this mentor was that "one of my mentors was in the room, and he did nothing." There was no support offered. For Experienced Pastor 4, the circumstance was slightly different (in this case, a fellow associate pastor who was a bully) but the experience with a mentor was similar. Experienced Pastor 4 said: "And it became a battle actually…. I didn't feel like I was supported. I felt like the church bully

was supported [by my mentor]. And that was very difficult for me to deal with and not helpful."

**Validation**.  A second theme distinctive to the Experienced Pastor Focus Group was captured in the language of validation. For two of the pastors in this focus group, having a mentor join them in their pain, authenticating and legitimizing their feelings in the process, was powerful. Experienced Pastor 3, for example, said that such behavior by a mentor made a significant difference: "lamenting, mourning that situation, whatever, they're honest, that was helpful, most definitely." For Experienced Pastor 5, the description was even more emotionally intense. For this pastor, an effective mentor "was somebody that actually heard enough and understood where I was coming from that just cried with me." For them, this stood in contrast to practices like providing guidance and counsel. This practice involved a recognition of the pain the pastor was facing: "[They] didn't try to solve my problem. But had a level of validating that this was hard. And I think that sometimes I just needed to know that, like, okay, I'm not making this up in my mind. Okay, it is hard and having somebody that's been down the road a little bit farther going, 'Yeah, this is a tough one. Hang in there.'"

In summary, two clusters of major themes emerged from the data. One such cluster included themes that described the cultivation of the relational context for mentoring. This group included radical availability which was perceived as demonstrating love and care for the mentee. This cluster of themes also included establishing deep trust which made the relational context "safe" for self-disclosure, being very honest in providing insight and sharing personal elements of life in addition to vocational. A second set of themes in the data clustered around specific practices that

assisted mentees in addressing the issues and challenges they faced. These included a strong value for the experience of the mentor which provided a treasure of wisdom that could inform the efforts to address those challenges. In addition, subjects valued the help of a mentor in providing new and different perspectives on those issues through the use of active listening and the asking of insightful questions. An additional theme was the generous use of encouragement. Beyond these major themes, three minor themes also emerged in the data: avoiding dismissiveness of the challenges or the mentee's response, praying with/for the mentee, and not seeking to replicate oneself in the mentee. For the experienced pastors, the minor themes of advocacy and validation also were important.

**Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

**What best practices do other learning institutions and denominational organizations use for mentoring graduates in the first few years of ministry?**

The data to answer this question was collected through a researcher-designed Institutional Practices Survey of faculty members who teach in ministry degree programs at Christian liberal arts colleges and universities. Question 2 of the survey inquired about formal matching of graduates with mentors (with the open-ended Question 3 allowing for description of how this is done). Question 4 addressed the encouragement of mentee initiative in seeking out a mentor. Question 5 probed the ways various mentoring practices are encouraged or taught. Question 6 inquired about cooperative mentoring programs with denominational offices, and question 7 followed up on what that the various ministry departments might do with graduates.

The Institutional Practices Survey had a 28.9 percent response rate, receiving 126 responses from the 436 invitations sent. Of the 126 responses, five persons opted out of

the survey in the first question which addressed informed consent, leaving 121

respondents considering the questions in the survey.

The responses to Question 2 in the survey suggest that very few academic

programs formally match their graduates with mentors in those early years of vocational

ministry. Of the ninety-seven respondents who answered the question, 93.81 percent

indicated that this was not the case. Responses to the open-ended Questions 3 and 9

suggest that much of the encouragement, matching, and promotion of mentoring for

graduates from these academic institutions happens more informally and at the initiative

of the graduate. Of the ninety-three respondents who chose to write in an answer to

Question 9, thirty-eight indicated that this happened, in their words, "informally" or "not

formally" but at the "student's initiative." Twelve respondents also indicated in their

responses to Question 9 that nothing is really done to match students with mentors during

this time, and 2 wrote "NA" (not applicable). One respondent specifically stated that they

"put the responsibility on the graduate." Several referenced the fact that they have formal

mentoring programs for students while they are in their programs at the academic

institutions but not necessarily formally once they graduate and are serving in ministry.

Figure 4.4 – Survey Responses: Formal Match

Q2 Are graduates from your ministry degree programs formally matched with a mentor for the first 1-3 years of their work in fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry?
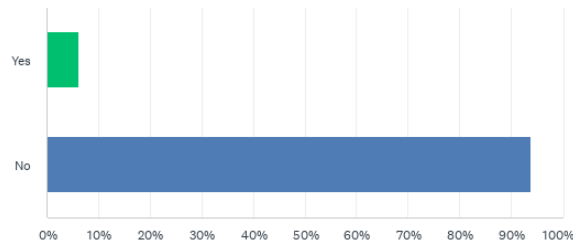


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| ▾ Yes | 6.19% | 6 |
| ▾ No | 93.81% | 91 |
| TOTAL | | 97 |

One element noted by three respondents was that most (if not all) of their ministry students move on from their undergraduate institutions to complete graduate work at seminaries, and, thus, are not immediately stepping into full time vocational ministry. Respondent 83 to Question 9, for example, wrote that "our pastoral candidates continue to seminary where they are placed in these types of relationships." Respondent 41 to Question 9 also indicated that "we do not directly place students into ministry posts – we send them forward for further training." In addition, one response to Question 9 would seem to indicate that the academic/ecclesiastical divide also informs this practice for some institutions. Respondent 66 to Question 9 wrote that "this is regarded as more of an ecclesiastical issue than an academic issue. We lack the resources to guide graduates through their ministry experience." Some additional support for this reality is seen in the responses by 9 subjects who described some cooperative work with denominational

officials or programs in connecting students/graduates with mentors in those early years of ministry, seeing that as more of a church-related (*i.e.*, an ecclesiastical) matter.

One particularly interesting element that emerged in the responses to the open-ended Question 3 was the reference to ministry residency programs in local churches. Respondent 13 mentioned graduates who are "seeking residency programs to get some mentoring early in their ministries," and Respondent #28 noted that "sometimes mentoring does occur when students enter a ministry residency program where mentoring occurs within that program on site at the church but is not conducted by our academic institution." Respondent 56 also referenced that a graduate may be hired as a "pastoral intern working with a more seasoned pastor in a multi-staff church."

The data from Question 4 suggests that nearly three-fourths of students in the degree programs represented in the sample receive encouragement to seek out mentoring specifically in a class. Of the ninety-six respondents who answered this question, 72.92 percent indicated that this was the case at their institution.

Figure 4.5 – Survey Responses: Encouraging Pursuit of Mentor

Q4 Do you encourage pursuit of mentoring following graduation specifically in a class in your ministry degree programs.
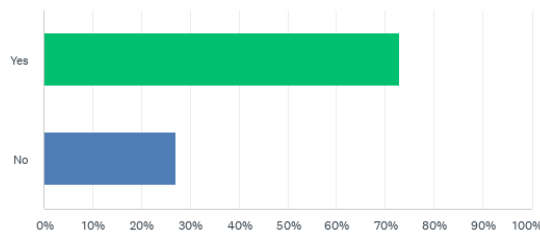


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 72.92% | 70 |
| No | 27.08% | 26 |
| TOTAL | | 96 |

This reality is borne out and elucidated in the responses to Question 5. Several aspects of ministry mentoring were described by respondents as being "taught/encouraged in a class." The aspect of mentoring receiving the highest total was "taking the initiative in finding a mentor on their own" (71.88 percent). A number of factors may account for this, but a comment by Respondent 26 to Question 9 provides a potentially important observation here: "Students don't have practice in seeking out mentors, since they are used to being sought." Several respondents to the open-ended Question 9 indicated that often mentoring was expected to be initiated by their graduates as they began their work in ministry. Also receiving strong mention with regard to being "taught/encouraged in a class" were the following:

- building trust in a mentoring relationship through progressive self-disclosure between mentor and mentee (52.13 percent)

- affirmation and encouragement in current ministry situations (63.83 percent)

- mutual reflection on specific ministry experiences and strategizing about similar future experiences (65.26 percent)

- observation and reflection on the modeling of ministry practices by a mentor (62.77 percent)

- affirmation and encouragement regarding long term potential effectiveness in ministry (57.89 percent)

Two practices stand out as appearing to be "taught/encouraged in a class" much less than these others. The first of these is "considering the use of mentoring via electronic/internet means – Zoom, phone, Skype, email, etc." (i.e., some form of e-mentoring). Only 24.73 percent indicated that this was taught/encouraged in a class.

While several responses to the open-ended Question 9 indicated that they have used these means to have ongoing interaction with graduates to facilitate their engagement with mentoring in ministry, one respondent specifically described email correspondence as unhelpful in comparison to face-to-face means. Respondent 17 to Question 9 said, "I find emails the least efficient and least effective." In addition, the other mentoring practice that appeared to be much less "taught/encouraged in a class" was "seeking out mentors from different levels of experience in ministry." Only 36.17 percent indicated that this was the case.

Figure 4.6 – Survey Responses: Modes of Encouraging Mentoring Practices

| MENTORING PRACTICE | TAUGHT/ ENCOURAGED IN A CLASS | ENCOURAGED IN FACULTY MENTORING | ENCOURAGED IN PRINTED OR ELECTRONIC MATERIALS GIVEN/SENT TO GRADUATES | ENCOURAGED BY OTHER MEANS | NOT SPECIFICALLY TAUGHT/ ENCOURAGED |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Taking the initiative in finding a mentor on their own | 71.88% 69 | 54.17% 52 | 5.21% 6 | 20.83% 20 | 10.42% 10 |
| Building trust in a mentoring relationship through progressive self-disclosure between mentor and mentee | 52.13% 49 | 40.43% 38 | 3.19% 3 | 18.09% 17 | 30.85% 29 |
| Affirmation and encouragement in current ministry situations | 63.83% 60 | 55.32% 52 | 6.38% 6 | 27.66% 26 | 5.32% 5 |
| Mutual reflection on specific ministry experiences and strategizing about future experiences | 65.26% 62 | 53.68% 51 | 8.42% 8 | 15.79% 15 | 16.84% 16 |
| Observation and reflection on the modeling of ministry practices by a mentor | 62.77% 59 | 40.43% 38 | 7.45% 7 | 17.02% 16 | 20.21%19 |
| Considering the use of mentoring via electronic/internet means – Zoom, phone, Skype, email, etc. | 24.73% 23 | 33.33% 31 | 5.38% 5 | 16.13% 15 | 47.31% 44 |
| Seeking out mentors from different levels of experience in ministry (e.g., 5, 10, 15, more years of experience in ministry) | 36.17% 34 | 24.47% 23 | 3.19% | 18.09% 17 | 50.00% 47 |
| Affirmation and encouragement regarding long term potential effective in ministry | 57.89% 55 | 47.37% 45 | 7.37% 7 | 20.00% 19 | 16.84% 16 |

A number of practices are also identified in the survey data as being encouraged in faculty mentoring but at levels below that of class curriculum. Most of the practices in the realm of faculty mentoring range between 40.43 percent and 55.32 percent. As was the case with class curriculum emphasis, consideration of e-mentoring practices (33.33 percent) and utilizing a multi-generational mentoring team (24.47 percent) were indicated to be less frequent.

Few of these mentoring practices are "encouraged in printed or electronic materials given/sent to graduates." All the mentoring practices were indicated to be encouraged in this manner by less than 10 percent of respondents, falling in the range from 3.19 percent and 8.42 percent.

Survey data also indicated that only about a tenth of the respondents work in an academic setting in which they utilize a cooperative program working with denominational officials to formally match graduates of their ministry program with mentors in ministry. Ten of the ninety-six answers to that question indicated that this was the case. One of the themes that emerged from the answers to the open-ended Question 9 (as noted above) is that much of this happens informally, through faculty encouragement or communication.

Figure 4.7 – Survey Responses: Cooperative Programs

Q6 Do you utilize a cooperative program, working with denominational officials, to formally match graduates of our ministry degree program with mentors in ministry.
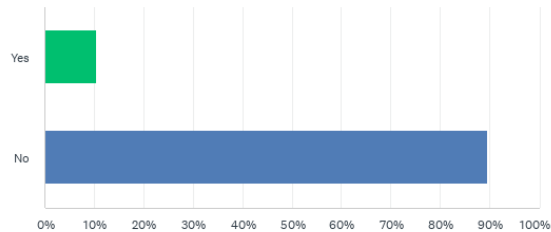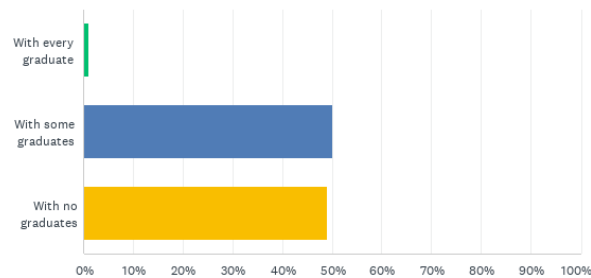
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 10.42% | 10 |
| No | 89.58% | 86 |
| TOTAL | | 96 |

Though few faculty utilize formal mentor matching programs or cooperative efforts with denominational officials, half of the respondents in the survey who answered Question 7 indicated that they do follow up with *some* graduates to encourage mentoring or to find out if graduates have found a mentor. One respondent indicated that they follow up with *every* graduate from the program. Respondent 91 to the open-ended Question 9 indicated that "there is one professor assigned to follow-up with graduates" and that this professor "schedules trips where a critical mass of graduates live and meets with them for a meal to catch up and offer encouragement. The same professor and his wife oversee a regular newsletter sent to graduates that keeps them informed and encourages them to gather in support of each if possible." Though only one respondent indicated they follow up with every alumnus, 50 percent of those answering this question indicated that they follow up with some of their graduates.

Figure 4.8 – Survey Responses: Alumni Follow-up

Q7 Do you follow up with alumni after graduation to encourage mentoring or to find out if graduates have initiated a relationship with a mentor?

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| With every graduate | 1.04% | 1 |
| With some graduates | 50.00% | 48 |
| With no graduates | 48.96% | 47 |
| TOTAL | | 96 |

The final question in the survey, Question 9, provided an opportunity for respondents to offer a very broad range of practices that faculty members use to facilitate the mentoring of graduates from their ministry programs in those first few years of vocational ministry. In addition to the ways this data illumines some of the other survey data (already noted above), two distinctive ideas stand out as further contributions. One of those themes is using conferences as an opportunity to gather and connect graduates for purposes of encouraging and facilitating mentoring relationships. The other is to consistently invite alumni back to share in classes. This practice serves two purposes: fostering connections between current students and alumni and allowing the content of the alumni presentations to help students see the importance of establishing a mentoring relationship in those early years of vocational ministry.

In summary, the data from the Institutional Practices Survey revealed the following observations. Relatively few institutions utilize a formal mentor matching program for graduates of their Christian Ministries (or equivalent) programs. Instead, this process happens more informally often with encouragement by faculty during and after the educational experience. As a part of those academic programs, faculty often encourage a number of mentoring practices that students should seek or cultivate in their future vocational experiences: taking the initiative to seek out a mentor, building trust in a mentoring relationship through progressive self-disclosure, affirmation/encouragement in the current ministry situation, mutual reflection on ministry experiences, strategizing for future ministry practice, observation/reflection on the modeling of a mentor's ministry practice, and affirmation/encouragement regarding a mentee's long term ministry effectiveness. The survey also revealed that faculty often do not specifically encourage e-mentoring practices or establishing a developmental network of multi-generational mentors in a class situation or in mentoring during the educational years. In addition, the survey data suggest that these mentoring practices are often not specifically encouraged in formal follow-up communication with alumni of the Christian Ministries programs. Few of these academic institutions formally work with denominational bodies to match graduates with mentors in their first years of vocational ministry in that denomination.

## Summary of Major Findings

The data from this project provide valuable information about the experience of mentoring for graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program in those early years of vocational ministry. In the data, some obvious and expected confirmations exist of issues/challenges and general mentoring practices that one would find in any vocational

situation for a new college graduate. Issues like managing work time/tasks and resolving conflict would be common in most workplaces. Mentoring practices like establishing trust, communicating with honesty, and being generous with encouragement are likely valued by all graduates beginning their vocational life. Given the focus of this study on the mentoring experience for those in *pastoral ministry*, and especially from the perspective of those new pastors rather than the seasoned leaders who are often doing the mentoring, the major findings of this study that are distinctive to pastoral ministry are as follows:

1) Pastors in their first few years of ministry value a mentor's help and wisdom distinctively in dealing with the issues of establishing healthy work-life balance, adapting to higher levels of administrative work tasks, and dealing with the complex dynamics of "messy ministry" (*i.e.*, sin, consequences of sin, complexity, conflict, etc.).

2) For female newer pastors, encountering resistance to women's service in ministry is an additional issue on which the counsel and encouragement of a mentor is considered valuable.

3) Newer pastors show strong appreciation for mentors who make themselves generously available at all times in person and via phone/text as a commitment demonstrating care.

4) Effective mentors of new pastors help their mentees reframe their perspective on ministry through active listening and the asking of thoughtful questions.

5) Many graduates of Christian Ministries programs take the initiative themselves to establish mentoring relationships, having been encouraged to do so by their faculty professors in classes and in mentoring relationships during academic study.

**CHAPTER 5**

**LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

**Overview of the Chapter**

Graduates of Christian Ministries degree programs face significant challenges as they transition from academic preparation to the practice of vocational ministry. They must turn theory into practice, navigate the unexpected complexities of ministry circumstances, and maintain commitment to their own spiritual formation. Often this has been done with the wise assistance of a more experienced guide, a mentor. The specific practices that would make a mentor most effective in that process are the focus of this project. The purpose of this research was to discover the best practices for a multi-generational mentoring program for graduates of the Christian Ministries programs at Bethel University (Indiana) who are transitioning to full time pastoral ministry.

In this chapter, the major findings of this project will be explained and synthesized with the researcher's personal observations and significant contributions from the literature review and the biblical/theological foundations for these practices. In addition, the implications for ministry will be explored and the limitations of this study identified. Finally, unexpected observations of the researcher will be noted and recommendations for the mentoring of pastors in their first years of ministry will be offered.

**Major Findings**

**First Finding: Wisdom for Crucial Tasks and Conundrums**

Pastors in their first few years of ministry value a mentor's help and wisdom distinctively in dealing with the issues of establishing healthy work-life balance, adapting

to higher levels of administrative work tasks, and dealing with the complex dynamics of "messy ministry" (i.e., sin, consequences of sin, complexity, conflict, etc.).

As a college professor, I am especially interested in finding out those issues or challenges that my students face in that transition to vocational ministry. Some of those challenges may seem intuitive or probable, such as learning to do ministry practices for the first time outside of a supervised situation, establishing a schedule of worktime, maintaining holiness of life, etc. As I was conducting my research for this project, the issues of adapting to a higher-than-expected proportion of administrative responsibilities, work-life balance, and the messiness of ministry were quite prevalent among our recently graduated alumni and were also issues for which the counsel of a mentor was considered very helpful.

During the interviews, I noticed that the intensity of these challenges was especially acute for a number of the newer pastors, and this intensity often produced deep emotional tones in their expression. Some of these newer pastors linked their experiences of these challenges with questions about their ministerial calling and, at times, feelings of near desperation. Having served myself as a pastor for more than two decades prior to serving in academia, I have experienced the ways that the demands of ministry and expectations of church members/leaders can push pastors in a way that work and personal life fall tragically out of balance. Ministry is typically not defined by the clock, and a shortage of people in need of the ministry a pastor has to offer never exists. I have been in many discussions where the subject of the burnout of pastors has been grieved and has been the subject of warnings. Often, I had associated burnout with the longer-term tenure

of pastors. The findings of this study suggest that the seeds of such burnout may be sprouting very early in a pastor's vocational life.

Several of the newer pastors who cited this issue as pronounced in their experience identified the issue of sabbath and rest as particularly important. Longer work hours and the failure to adhere to a weekly rhythm that includes the sabbath principle make a pastor especially vulnerable. Ministry mentors can be especially helpful to newer pastors by asking them about and holding them accountable for such matters very early in their ministry tenure. I noticed that several of the newer pastors indicated that they had cognitive awareness of what they needed to do on this matter but often needed the assistance of a mentor either to provide aid in working it out in their particular vocational context or simply to hold them accountable for faithfully observing such boundaries. In some cases, they merely needed someone to assure them that saying "no" to something good was acceptable.

Also of interest was the sense of surprise that many newer pastors felt with the proportion of their work schedules that were consumed with administrative tasks. For many, this realization seemed to shatter a naiveté about how pastoral ministry would be experienced. While teaching and preaching the Bible and theology were certainly an important part of their ministry praxis, many seemed surprised by and unprepared for the many administrative tasks that were required of them. As was the case with the work-life balance issue, in this case, the guidance of a mentor was valued in the working out of the application of this reality in ministry experience.

For many of these newer pastors, what they called the "messiness of ministry" was a more unexpected discovery of this research project. I had anticipated responses

from the newer pastors that fell more in the category of advice on how to do some ministry practices more effectively, but as I listened to the responses of these pastors, particularly in the personal interviews, I was struck by how many of these "messy" matters were also unexpected by the newer pastors and that was at least in part what made them stand out as issues about which the counsel of a mentor would be helpful. The scope of this "messiness" was impressive: suicidal threats, sexual abuse, drunkenness, divorce, drugs, depression, anger, conflict, church politics, gossip, lying, being arrested, and encounters with the demonic. Such situations clearly call for the discernment that flows from wisdom borne of experience.

As noted in the literature review, ministry mentoring has long included a concern for the personal spiritual development of pastors and not merely a process for facilitating vocational promotion or fostering better job performance. The emphasis on work-life balance that emerged in this study is consistent with the strong concern for spiritual formation that is emphasized in the literature (e.g., Wright *Mentoring* 58; Williams 71). In fact, Williams emphasizes this notion of the overlap of a pastor's "being" and "doing" the tasks of pastoral ministry and the vitally important role of "drawing patterns and forming habits that [pastors] will carry with them into every church or place of ministry in which they serve" (55). The matter of work-life balance is one such essential pattern in spiritual development. In fact, Saccone identifies overcommitment, one of the symptoms of problems with work-life balance, as a tension people face in relational leadership, a tension that is often anchored in fear driven by their failure to conceive of God's unconditional love for the inherent value of who God has created them to be (88). Overcommitment is an issue of spiritual formation.

The biblical and theological foundations for this project provide a fuller understanding of this issue. The aforementioned example of Jethro and Moses in Exodus 18 uses language that suggests a similar concern. When Jethro observed Moses' work as a judge deciding the cases and disputes that are brought to him by the people, Jethro quickly recognized that the way in which Moses was doing the work was not sustainable. Though the focus of the passage is on the solution of delegation provided through Jethro's counsel, the language Jethro used is that of the health of the leader: "What you are doing is not good. *You will surely wear yourself out*, both you and these people with you" (Exodus 18.17b-18a, emphasis mine). Though the Old Testament does not speak of "burnout" in the modern sense, the language of "wearing yourself out" clearly speaks of a similar dynamic. The issue in this passage is not merely delegation as a practical organizational solution (though the passage is that) but, in a fundamental sense, Moses' health as the leader of God's people. Spiritual health for pastors includes establishing, with a mentor's help, the patterns of health through the spiritual formation of the leader. The fact that several newer pastors noted the sabbath principle as a key part of this issue in their development is no accident.

**Second Finding: Specialized Support for Women-Pastor-Specific Challenges**

For female newer pastors, encountering resistance to women's service in ministry is an additional issue on which the counsel and encouragement of a mentor is considered valuable.

Nearly all of the women subjects in my research study described encountering resistance in some way to their serving in ministry as a woman. The descriptions of their experiences reflected a broad range of attitudes. On one end of the spectrum a subject

described being encouraged by other staff members but sometimes overlooked or not included in things other pastors (men) were going to do. She noted that she felt supported but sometimes left out. Even in this case, however, with some of the boys in the youth ministry, she encountered attitudes expressed directly to her that because she was a woman, she shouldn't be teaching them, and this was in the back of her mind when teaching the group. At the other end of the spectrum, another subject described being hired as an administrative assistant at a church that embraced complementarianism because women weren't hired as pastors or ministry directors. Yet she was also told in the process that the staff would allow her to be involved in ministry activities as a part of her role. During her employment, however, she encountered attitudes of anger and unkind criticism that were directed at her *because* she was female. Interestingly, another of the female subjects in the study who serves in a denomination that is explicitly and unapologetically egalitarian, described being appointed by the senior pastor to serve as a campus pastor (at a multisite church) and yet encountering substantial resistance and criticism by laypersons in the church specifically because she was female. They felt that she should not be permitted to serve in that role. This occurred despite the strong, public support of the senior pastor who was appointing her to this role.

This research study revealed that women graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University will very likely encounter similar attitudes of resistance and or exclusion by people in the churches where they serve in their initial years of vocational ministry. Some of these graduates serve in churches/denominations that lean more toward a complementarian perspective where this might be more readily anticipated. Even those who serve in churches/denominations where women are

embraced in ministry are likely to encounter attitudes of resistance and criticism, both explicit and implicit. Many Evangelical churches have been influenced by the work of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood which advocates for a complementarian understanding of male and female roles in the church (and in the home), particularly by the 2017 Nashville Statement issued by this organization.

On this issue, female novice pastors particularly value the wisdom, guidance, and encouragement of a mentor. In these cases, a mentor who is a woman is considered particularly helpful. She has likely experienced this herself and so she's able to identify and empathize with the mentee. She also can provide counsel and guidance both in processing the pain of the experience and in responding effectively to the criticism.

The literature on spiritual mentoring and even ministry mentoring does not really deal directly with this issue. Much of the literature seems founded in the assumption that both men and women benefit from mentoring, at least in a general sense. That said, Traci West details her experiences from the early days of her calling to ministry all the way through her seminary education to her appointment as the pastor of a church. One factor encountered in the interviewing process for candidacy was the choice of questions she was asked, in some cases, questions that seem to have been chosen precisely because she was female. In this case, the questions involved how she would teach and uphold "*all* of the Holy Scriptures," but with specific reference to how she would uphold those parts of Scripture that teach "the subordination and silencing of women" as the members of her interview committee interpretively described the biblical content (239). The members of the committee had some doubts about whether they could support her desire to be ordained in light of some of those Scripture passages. She writes, "I felt that I had to

assuage those doubts and prove that I had a right to be a minister, 'even though' I was a woman" (240). While more complex in other ways (race, etc.), her journey is not unlike that of many of the women in this research study who also encountered reluctance or, at times, outright resistance to their work in ministry because they were women.

The faculty in the Religion and Philosophy Department at Bethel University embrace an egalitarian perspective on the matter of women in ministry believing this to be the teaching of Scripture and expressed in theological convictions drawn from the testimony of the Bible. For one graduate in the study, this teaching ironically increased the element of surprise when she encountered this issue in pastoral ministry. She had experienced affirmation and encouragement throughout her academic program and so felt a bit more ambushed by what she encountered in the daily tasks of ministry. The egalitarian perspective held by the faculty members includes several significant observations about how the Bible describes the sexes. Both male and female are created in the image of the trinitarian God in whom the mutuality of relationships, not subjugation, is seen (Grenz). In the creation account, for example, the Hebrew word 'ēzer, often translated helper in describing woman's relationship to man, does not imply subordination but rather what Belleville calls "strong partnership" (*An Egalitarian Perspective* 27, also Grenz 164). A number of people described as performing ministry in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments were women: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Isaiah's wife, Anna, Lydia, Priscilla, Junia, etc. (Belleville "An Egalitarian Perspective;" Keener "Another Egalitarian"; Witherington *Women in the Ministry;* Witherington *Women and the Genesis*). Both men and women are spiritually gifted by God for ministry, and this is granted according to the grace and will of God, not based on gender

or sex (Fee; Long; Smythe). Both men and women are called by God, and this call is often evidenced in both through a strong inner conviction and evidence of giftings (Keener *Paul, Women and Wives*). Finally, the very few Scriptural passages that would seem to prohibit women from teaching or leading are either tied to specific historical-cultural matters or are misinterpreted (or both). For example, the passage from 1 Timothy 2.9-15 calls women to learn in silence but seems to refer to women who were uneducated in the Scripture and who were domineering in their efforts to teach it (Belleville "Teaching and Usurping,"; Belleville "An Egalitarian,"; Keener *Paul, Women and Wives; Payne*). Given the emphasis placed on the authority of Scripture in Evangelical churches, engaging leaders in studying specifically about what the Bible teaches on this topic may be helpful in addressing this issue. In summary, substantial support for women in ministry exists in Scripture, and women who are making that transition from college to vocational ministry may find affirmation in the encouragement of a mentor who can help them find confidence in this truth and also deal meaningfully with those in their churches who take a more complementarian view.

**Third Finding: The Major Significance of Mentor Accessibility**

Newer pastors show strong appreciation for mentors who make themselves generously available at all times in person and via phone/text as a commitment demonstrating care.

While not a surprise that mentees would want their mentors to make themselves available to help when needed, I did not expect the kind of weight or intensity given to the value assigned to this element of mentoring practice. Some subjects in both the interviews and in the focus groups variously described availability as "my number one"

or "the big one." Some interview subjects not only named this as an important mentoring practice but also talked quite extensively about examples of times when they needed to talk with their mentor very quickly and valued the responsiveness of their mentor in the moment.

One element in the importance ascribed to this mentoring practice may be the nature of pastoral ministry itself. Unlike the more established hours that employees in a business environment face, the kinds of "messy" problems that arise in ministry don't happen during "normal business hours" and often require more immediate action. As I reflect back on my own years in pastoral ministry, I can think of many such instances where I was called to the home of a member of my congregation because of a desperate situation that needs *immediate* pastoral response (sometimes even on a day off, late at night, or a pastoral sabbath day). When the needs are not tied to work hours, then neither are the needs to tap into the valuable counsel a mentor can provide. In some cases, newer pastors indicated that they did not always need to meet in person immediately but might need to have a brief conversation to gain some initial perspective and then meet for a longer duration at a later time.

Another element that helps to explain the emphasis placed on this practice is that several newer pastors interpreted availability of their mentor as an indication of commitment and care. When availability of a mentor was experienced positively by several of the newer pastors in this study, the availability was described in terms that indicated a pastor experienced it as an expression of care and love. Being available contributed to stronger trust by the mentee. The newer pastors who expressed their

emphasis on this practice as arising out of negative experiences clearly described this as an issuing of failing to care or nearly as a point of disloyalty.

The concept of availability is more assumed than explicitly stated in the literature that addresses mentoring. Mentors who embrace a willingness to invest time and work in a mentee are assumed to be willing to be available, though that assumption may not always carry the notion of 24-7 availability. More to the point in the literature would be the clarification of expectations as the mentoring relationship is being initially established. As noted in the literature review, several writers recommend establishing expectations of accountability for both mentor and mentee, with some (e.g., Stanley and Clinton) recommending that this establishment even be done in a formal agreement.

The literature on phases of a mentoring relationship is also relevant here. In addition to establishing expectations, those early stages of relational development are also crucial in establishing the quality of the relationship, especially the factor of trust. Anderson and Reese emphasize that the initial seasons of the mentoring relationship are when the mentees test loyalty and right intentions on the part of a mentor (83). Given the language of trust and loyalty that newer pastors attach to this experience of availability, such testing could include a recognition of responsiveness by the mentor. One notices a correspondence in the business mentoring literature. For example, Erdem and Aytemur include factors like predictability and showing interest as behaviors that contribute to establishing trust in the mentoring relationship (61).

The passages describing mentoring relationships in Scripture do not provide the reader enough information to know the availability that mentors offered and are often not specifically addressing practices like this. For example, the degree to which Paul was

always and everywhere available for Timothy is unknown (though one assumes, tongue

in cheek, that phone calls and texts were not a part of such availability). The same can be

said of Barnabas and Paul or Moses and Joshua. That said, given the theological

rootedness of the mentoring relationship in the doctrine of the Trinity, some help may be

offered by the quality of relationship observed among the persons of the Trinity. Pinnock

called the trinity "a loving relationality" (23). Specifically, the nature of that love is

described biblically as self-giving and sacrificial. In that sense, one might say that each

person of the Trinity is "available" to the others consistently and faithfully.

That loyalty and dependability in the love of God for human beings then becomes

the quality of love on which the mentoring relationship is modeled. The consistent

availability of a mentor to their mentee is one way in which that love is operationalized

by the mentor in their conduct and experienced as care, loyalty, and love by the mentee.

Faithfulness by a mentor in multiple ways, but particularly in this case in terms of

consistent availability, is an expression of the God-given, God-modeled love for us.

**Fourth Finding: The Significance of Empathic Conversational Perspective**

**Cultivation**

Effective mentors of new pastors help their mentees reframe their perspective on

ministry through active listening and the asking of thoughtful questions.

While my expectations going into this research project included the idea that

ministry mentors would be particularly valued for the advice they provided about

ministry practices, this was seldom mentioned by subjects of the interviews or focus

groups. A mentor's assistance in seeing a new perspective on an issue or challenge was

much more significant from the perspective of newer pastors. As noted in chapter 4, this value of perspective occurred across a whole range of situations.

I noticed a certain tension in the responses of the newer pastors on this point. While those new to ministry valued and respected the experience of their long-tenured mentors, they were not necessarily looking for their mentors to simply tell them what to do. In fact, one mentee explicitly stated that "we're not here to just get advice all the time." Though I suspect that the newer pastors I heard from in this study would not reject advice regarding ministry practice, particularly in those "messy" moments, the value of experience often seemed to be that it enabled their mentor to help them gain a different perspective on that situation. This idea of perspective seemed to be in large measure why practices like active listening and the asking of insightful questions were highly valued by mentees. Listening provided safe space for the mentee to process the issue. Thoughtful, well-timed questions helped guide the thinking process.

This finding is consistent with a number of points highlighted in the literature review. The utilization of listening and inquiry as opposed to straight advice is at the heart of understanding the mentoring relationship as *developmental* as Levinson et al. had characterized it in their early work. The concern in such a relationship is not merely to solve a singular problem or issue but rather to develop the capacity of mentees to be able to resolve many such similar issues throughout their lives (both personal and vocational). Wright is very explicit about this in the context of mentoring Christian leaders, describing the concern in the mentoring process as not just information transfer but enabling true learning on the part of the mentee (*Mentoring* 68). The literature review noted that given this objective, practices like "expectant listening" and the asking of thought-provoking

questions would help more effectively to cultivate the mentee's development in thinking. The findings of this study show strong consistency with these practices.

This finding would also show strong support for Blodgett's emphasis on transformative mentoring as opposed to functionalist mentoring. Blodgett describes functionalist mentoring as helping a mentee to "function" in their particular vocational context. Given that objective, this aspect of mentoring often includes providing advice and teaching skills. Transformative mentoring, though, in Blodgett's view, aims to go deeper, challenge thinking, and invite a mentee to see things from a different perspective. This emphasis makes practices like listening and question asking even more essential. As Blodgett states, "This kind of mentoring thus demands mutual reflection. Its methods are more Socratic than didactic, centered more on questions than advice" (55). The subjects in this study seemed to favor a similar approach and valued the active listening and insightful questions their mentors offered on the road to discovery.

This finding also shows consistency with the contributions of adult learning theory and particularly Mezirow's transformative learning. Central to this approach was the focus on deep learning at the level of values, underlying assumptions, frames of reference, beliefs, and perspective. Individual experience functions as the prompt for critical reflection, and, in this study, newer pastor mentees viewed their issues and challenges in such a way. Then, transformative learning theory emphasizes critical reflection through dialogue with others as the process by which perspectives shift and frames of reference are revealed and/or challenged. Not so surprisingly, the literature review noted that researchers like Cranton emphasized the importance of asking questions as the tools by which this reflective discourse achieves meaningful learning.

The business mentoring literature applies adult learning theory more specifically to the

mentoring relationship, pairing active listening and thoughtful question asking (see, e.g.,

Cranwell-Ward; Johnson and Ridley; Klasen and Clutterbuck), with Johnson and Ridley

echoing Blodgett (quoted above) as counseling mentors to "ask Socratic questions."

Newer pastors in this study clearly valued these practices in their experiences of

mentoring.

In the literature review, I noted the biblical foundation that the wisdom literature

offers for understanding the mentoring process. The book of Proverbs contains numerous

imperatives to listen to the counsel of the wise (more than ten by my count) and even

more descriptions of how important listening to the wise is. Such references reflect more

the activity of the learner rather than the teacher and thus are not directly applicable to

this finding. That said, God's methods of cultivating learning is instructive to note.

Another of the wisdom books, the book of Job, features God challenging Job's

perspective by a lengthy series of (in this case, rhetorical) questions. "Where were you

when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38.4a). "Who determined its

measurements?" (Job 38.5a). Then the series of questions continues incessantly all the

way to the second verse of chapter 40. In helping Job process a very difficult issue, the

question of suffering, God helps transform Job's perspective by a whole series of

questions. Granted, these questions are not so much "Socratic" or dialogical in nature,

though they do prompt an eventual response from Job that indicates a degree of

transformation in thinking has happened.

I observe a similar dynamic in the teaching of Jesus who asked questions

prolifically and often answered questions by asking questions. In calling their

evangelistically minded readers to ask lots of questions to their seeking friends, Everts and Schaupp note that Jesus' asking of provocative questions often prompted those who engaged him in conversation to see life from new perspectives. Given this finding of the study, an effective and valued mentor would be like Jesus in that the mentor would ask questions that prompt the mentee to think, to see differently (i.e., perspective), and to experience transformation through, in Paul's words in Romans 12.2, the renewing of one's mind.

**Fifth Finding: The Pressing Pursuit of Mentors**

Many graduates of Christian Ministries programs take the initiative themselves to establish mentoring relationships, having been encouraged to do so by their faculty professors in classes and in mentoring relationships during academic study.

As a professor myself in a Christian Ministries program at a university and someone who has seen significant results from mentoring, I was particularly interested in what this project might reveal about ways that my colleagues and I can help facilitate mentoring experiences for our graduates in their first years of vocational ministry. The survey of professors in similar CCCU programs in this study was designed particularly to draw this out. However, one thing that was clear from reviewing the open-ended responses is that many different practices were used to help foster mentoring in their graduates. One clear theme that emerged was that much of this happens informally (as opposed to formal matching programs) and typically is left to the initiative of the graduate who is starting out in ministry. Only 10.42 percent of respondents (ten of ninety-six) reported that they work with denominational officials in a formal matching program.

Some of this discovery is explained by the fact that some institutions are not institutionally affiliated or aligned. In addition, even among those institutions that are connected to a denomination, some students in their programs come from and/or are going to churches that are independent or are affiliated with other denominations. This occurrence is certainly true at Bethel University. In other cases, respondents noted that they have neither the time nor people resources to be able to do this in a systematic way. Yet some recognition existed of the fact that some important value may exist in the idea of newer pastors needing to take the initiative to establish this mentoring relationship or a mentoring network. The investment of their own effort, their "skin in the game," could merit significant value. Such initiative by the newer pastor may, indeed, enable them to locate a better match because they are seeking out those with whom they most readily connect relationally or those who minister in a context that is similar to the one the newer pastor is working in. One subject in this study, in fact, noted a negative experience with a mentor who was supplying advice based in a socio-demographic context that was radically different than the one the newer pastor was serving in. One of the members of the Experienced Pastor Focus Group strongly emphasized the importance in their experience of this mentoring relationship being established organically rather than through a formal matching effort.

In the literature review for this project, this element of mentee initiative is sometimes unmentioned and in other cases shown to have some important significance. In much of the literature addressing spiritual or ministry mentoring, the element of mentee initiative is largely ignored. This phenomenon is likely, in part, because these publications are often written specifically for mentors or prospective mentors and the

emphasis is often inspiring and urging them to seek out potential mentees. In some cases, content is directed to prospective mentees. Biehl, for example, devotes a section to the "Protégé's Perspective" which provides direction on characteristics to seek in a mentor, methods by which one could approach a prospective mentor, ways to function as a good mentee, and thanking mentors for their work. This work provides practical instruction but does not emphasize the specific value of taking the initiative in finding a mentor. Willimon cites encouragement to "get some good mentors" (284). Many of the professors who responded to the survey in this project would agree and, indeed, have indicated that they teach or encourage this in a class (71.88 percent) and encourage it in their mentoring of students during their academic preparation (54.17 percent).

This finding of the importance of mentee initiative is consistent with a number of findings in business mentoring research. The strong correlation between mentee initiative and growth in career competencies highlights the value of this behavior (de Janasz et al.; Higgins; Higgins et al.; Johnson and Ridley). Such initiative allows a mentee to achieve a more effective relational match with a mentor, as in the case of the focus group subject who stressed the value of that more informal, organic match. Such initiative also allows for a mentee to select mentors who are most likely to be helpful in meeting needs a mentee may have with regard to specific ministry practice proficiencies, leadership weaknesses, or, as noted in the case of one focus group member, who serves in a similar socio-demographic ministry context. In addition, such choice-based matching of mentors (as opposed to formal matching processes) enhances ownership and commitment for both mentee and mentor (Blake-Beard et al.).

The biblical examples in the literature review do not provide us with enough information to assess the way these mentoring relationships were initiated and to draw inferences about them that may be able to project more contemporary frames of reference on the text. That said, from a theological perspective, God seeks development in human beings, conforming them to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8.29, 2 Cor. 3.18). In this process of development, God often requires the investment of effort or of a response that expresses faith. The priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant had to actually step into the waters of the Jordan River before God stopped the flow of the river so that the people of Israel could cross into the Promised Land (Josh. 3.15-16). The people of Israel had to walk around the city of Jericho thirteen times over seven days before God felled the walls and enabled their conquest. God could easily have stopped the flow of the river or dropped the walls without human participation but saw benefit in the investment of faith in action. The "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11 features multiple examples of people whose action steps of faith were taken *prior to* God's work. This is foundational to Paul's imperative to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The expectation and exhortation for a mentee to take the initiative in seeking out and establishing a mentoring relationship is, in important ways, an expression of this biblical and divine dynamic.

## Ministry Implications of the Findings

Several important implications from these findings exist for the mentoring of pastors as they begin vocational ministry. The first of these implications relates to the value of training for mentors of newer pastors. Such training should include an explanation of issues that are particularly vexing for new pastors and for which the

counsel of mentors is especially valued, issues like work-life balance, adapting to a higher-than-expected proportion of administrative work, and the "messiness" of ministry. Trained mentors would then be able to listen for and ask about these issues and perhaps be prepared to address these matters from their own experience especially as they coach their mentees. While mentors would not want to assume that *all* mentees would find these two issues especially challenging, they could expect a higher probability of encountering them.

Such training could be done on a more formal basis as a university-sponsored workshop or could be offered as a workshop at district, regional, or national conference gatherings of denominational pastors. Another option would be a video-based training format that could be available on a continuing basis to share this information with prospective or active mentors perhaps through the development of a website dedicated to ministry mentoring practice that included videos, written resources, and maybe even an ongoing podcast.  In addition to the aforementioned challenging issues, such training could also highlight the practices found in this study to be especially valued by mentees, being consistent availability, active listening, and strategic question asking to help mentees establish new perspectives on issues and circumstances. For formal matching programs, consistent availability should be a requirement of prospective mentors who are being matched.

In addition, the surprise that many new pastors experienced with regard to administrative work in ministry suggests that Christian Ministries programs should ensure that they are preparing their students for this dimension of ministry. Courses that teach students how to address the myriad of administrative issues in ministry should be a

part of the curriculum. Given the emphasis on financial issues that emerged in the findings of this study, practices like budgeting and reading/interpreting financial reports should certainly be a part of such preparation. Courses whose subject is the theory and practice of pastoral care should also help take students beyond their naiveté with regard to the "messiness" they will encounter in ministry.

The findings of this study also suggest that faculty should continue to strongly encourage graduating students to take the initiative in establishing mentoring relationships as they transition to ministry and perhaps even to establish a network of such developmental relationships with mentors of varying degrees of tenure in ministry. Particularly important with regard to preparing prospective mentees would be to emphasize the importance of establishing expectations for the mentoring relationship early in the process of cultivating that relationship, especially emphasizing availability in some of those preliminary conversations. Some graduating students may not recognize at that point how important availability will be to them in the next months and years, and this would afford an opportunity to be sensitized to the need. For other graduating students, a naiveté may exist with regard to the importance of establishing expectations early so that both (or all) parties are on the same page in regard to key priorities.

A final implication of these findings is that, given the critical role of mentee initiative in establishing these programs, faculty in Christian Ministries programs should consider some sort of follow up with graduates several months after graduation as a reminder to take the initiative in establishing those relationships. While a few survey respondents noted that the resources to do extensive follow-up with graduates do not exist in this regard, even a single email that prompts memories of what was stressed

earlier in a class or in faculty mentoring could prompt important action. Such an email could offer a link to a video with brief testimonies from two or three previous alumni with regard to the high value that mentoring has had for them in getting established in ministry.

## Limitations of the Study

While this study faithfully reflects the perspective of a significant portion of recent graduates of the Bethel University Christian Ministries program, some limitations exist that should be considered regarding generalizability. First, most of the graduates of Bethel's Christian Ministries program who serve in ministry move directly into vocational ministry after completing the traditional undergraduate program. Some pursue graduate education after they have been in ministry for a time and typically complete that program while remaining in ministry. A very small number complete further graduate education before serving in vocational ministry. This phenomenon might present some important differences from Christian Ministries programs at other institutions whose primary role is to prepare their students to move on into graduate ministry programs (perhaps at a seminary) directly before launching into vocational ministry. Some of the responses of the survey respondents in this project indicated as much. In such situations, a newer pastor entering ministry may have greater developmental maturity to begin with and certainly more advanced educational preparation. This practice might lead to differences, particularly regarding the issues on which a mentor's counsel would be especially helpful.

A second limitation for this study related to geographic region. The newer pastor subjects in this study were primarily serving in ministry in the midwestern United States

likely due to the location and regional influence of Bethel University. One subject in the interviews had served in pastoral ministry outside this region but all others were within the Midwest. While some diversity in ministry context existed (rural, small town, suburb of larger city, metropolitan area/urban), most fell within one region of the country. Given the contextual nature of ecclesiastical ministry, the potential is present that some regional differences are not reflected in the data of this study. For example, some pastors did note the role of a mentor's help in contextualizing their ministry work. Greater mobility between the region where they received their education and the region where they serve in ministry could make this a higher priority issue if that were the case. Because this study focused on a sample from a university that is largely regional in drawing its ministry student population and placing its students in ministry, some variation could be found in comparison with other regions.

A third limitation for this study is that it deals primarily with students in the traditional undergraduate program at Bethel. These students entered their collegiate study right out of high school (or at least nearly so). One is mindful of the fact that other pastors, whose route to ministry takes a more nontraditional path perhaps as a second or third career experience, were a part of this study. Bethel does have a nontraditional program for such persons, but this program is limited in size, and this study did not include such persons since the curriculum and mode of curricular delivery for that program is significantly different. The possibility exists that for students of such a program the experience of the transition to ministry is quite different.

A fourth limitation of this study is the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in its subjects. This is due in part to the subject pool which involves graduates of the Christian

Ministries degree program at Bethel. While 32.1 percent of the Bethel student population is comprised of non-white ethnicities, this same diversity is not reflected in the Christian Ministries degree program (Bethel University Office of Institutional Research and Assessment 4). An effort was made in the purposive sampling of the Experienced Pastor Focus Group to include at least one pastor serving in a church that was predominantly non-white; the new pastors who served as subjects in this study included only two who described themselves as being of two or more ethnicities. The experiences of newer pastors of non-white ethnicities or serving in ministry settings that are predominantly non-white are different in meaningful ways from those described here.

Finally, Bethel University and its graduates who were included in this study are from an American Evangelical theological context. Only one subject in the Experienced Pastors Focus Group serves in ministry in a mainline theological and denominational context. All others serve in an Evangelical context. While none of the findings in this study seemed to be tied directly to theological (or even politico-cultural) convictions, the potential exists that some variations could exist in other contexts, like mainline American Protestantism.

## Unexpected Observations

While some of the data is what one might have expected regarding mentoring, some surprises did occur for me in the results. In particular, I was not expecting the absence of references to the significance of modeling by mentors. Only one subject in the Newer Pastor Interviews mentioned this as a mentoring practice that they had experienced as valuable and effective. Modeling was a feature identified in the literature review (in fact, identified by some researchers as a third function of mentoring) and had

also been a particularly strong element in my own experience of mentoring in the early

years of ministry. I'm mindful that my "early years" are quite far back now and

generational differences are, therefore, in play. Newer pastors possibly did not tie this

kind of a function to mentoring but viewed this function as conceptually distinct.

Likewise, given the strong emphasis on phases of the mentoring relationship in

the literature (both the spiritual/ministry mentoring and business mentoring literature), I

had anticipated some elements of this feature emerging in the data for this study that

seemed largely absent. This absence may be due to the fact that many of the newer

pastors who were interviewed or who participated in the focus group are quite early in

ministry. For example, half of the interview subjects are within their first one to two

years of ministry, three of the five Newer Pastor Focus Group participants had the same

tenure in ministry. Such pastors possibly have not yet experienced the development *over*

*time* of this relationship. Still, some meaningful representation existed of those who had

served longer in ministry and the changing nature of the mentor relationship over time

did not emerge as a factor in the responses.

Beyond the data from the pastors in the study, I also encountered a more

significant divide about the way that this issue was viewed by professors. While many

certainly saw strong convergence of purposes between their efforts in the academy and

the fostering of ministry success in the vocations of graduates, some saw a significant

distinction between the academic tasks of the educational program and the mentoring of

pastors in vocational ministry. Respondent 66 to Question 9 of the survey explicitly

stated this: "This is regarded as more of an ecclesiastical issue than an academic issue."

Such a view may suggest that perceptions of professors and ministry professionals could

exacerbate rather than enable the transition between academic preparation and ministry practice. The concern of this study has been bridging such a transition.

## Recommendations

This project provided valuable data regarding the experience of mentoring through the eyes of newer pastors. The processes of data collection and analysis unfolded in an effective manner. Nonetheless, hindsight suggests some valuable improvements that could be made to the research effort by those who continue the work:

1) While the open-ended interview questions provided valuable information about mentee's experiences in ministry and mentoring, the addition of a question near the end that invited them to rank their top three or top five issues or mentoring practices might have helped clarify relative importance of some of these elements in their minds. For example, after asking the questions regarding challenges and issues that they had faced in ministry, I would recommend asking them to rank their top three. Such a question would invite further reflection on their part and provide a sense of the significance of various issues for the researcher. Similarly, after asking questions about the mentoring practices they found especially helpful, asking for their top three or top five would provide additional data regarding relative importance.

2) Those who would seek to reproduce this project may want to consider whether mentors being described by interview and focus group subjects are internal to the church/organization or external. This was something I was not mindful of when conducting the data collection but began to notice during my analysis of the data. In some cases, subjects were describing practices by mentors who were mentors but also work supervisors. In other cases, they were describing mentors who were outside of the church

(and were even explicit in describing the value of their external perspectives). However, at other times the internal/external status of a mentor was ambiguous. In some matters, this difference may not be particularly significant but at other times it could have an important influence. For example, the internal/external status could magnify or obfuscate the importance of an issue like conflict with other staff, which some subjects identified as important issues. This internal/external status could also highlight or diminish a mentoring function like modeling. If the mentor is internal, a subject likely would have the opportunity to observe a mentor modeling certain ministry practices. If they are external, the opportunity to see the mentor in roles as an exemplar may be significantly limited.

3) With regard to future research, a fruitful avenue would include exploring the relationships between mentor and mentee experiences of ministry mentoring. This project explored the value of mentoring practices through the subjective experience of *mentees*. Much of the popular literature in ministry mentoring is based on the anecdotal experiences of ministry *mentors*. One might anticipate that the most effective and rewarding mentoring relationships might occur where there is convergence of those values and perceptions. Research that explores these perceptions through the experiences of mentor pairs (or perhaps developmental networks) and correlates this with assessments of satisfaction and effectiveness may reveal findings that shape ministry mentoring in valuable ways in the future.

4) Another fruitful trajectory for future research would be the analysis of the influence of generational dynamics. Some subjects in this project described some situations and dynamics that were shaped by generational factors. In some cases, this

involved dynamics of conflict. Yet the value that mentees place on a mentor's past experience may suggest that these generational differences also provide enrichment. Given the developing research in business mentoring with regard to developmental networks, future research here might investigate the value of having a mentor network that included mentors from different generational cohorts. The varying levels of experience and varying degrees of separation from those early years of ministry could potentially provide valuable perspective for a novice pastor.

## Postscript

The conclusion of this research project is in many ways the fulfillment of an enduring personal dream. For nearly two decades now, I have had an active interest in pursuing doctoral research. In the early years of that dream, some obstacles arose that delayed that dream, but I am thankful for God's grace and timing in sustaining the dream and bringing me to this moment. As noted in the first chapter, this project was born out of my own experiences with mentors who profoundly shaped my experiences in the practice of ministry. Since those years, I have had a persisting interest in investing in those who were launching into ministry.

As I have pursued this project, I have been impacted in significant ways. I have learned so many things:

- the value of working on a multi-year project that requires perseverance *over time*
- the value of learning from the wisdom and counsel of others (a dissertation coach who wisely guided my research design, faculty colleagues who reviewed the instruments/design, etc.)
- the integration of theology and ministry practice

Conducting the data collection for this project brought an intriguing set of personal responses. Many of the newer pastors who participated in this project were students in my courses over the past six years. Observing and hearing about their work in ministry was rewarding. I felt a sense of encouragement and pride to see them succeeding in effective ministry. At the same time, they candidly shared about some of their more difficult experiences and the pain that they experienced. In some cases, I deeply and empathetically felt their heartbreak and discouragement. This experience dredged up memories of some of the similar painful experiences in my own ministry tenure. Pastoral ministry is filled with challenges that can stretch us in ways we never thought possible. At the same time, ministry can be so wonderfully rewarding. Conducting this research involved both dynamics for me.

The memories of the ways that my life and ministry was shaped by inspirational mentors, the journey of shepherding this project through its various stages, and the deep conversations with many of my former students have all had a profound impact on me. This experience has inspired me to do all I can to ensure that my students, past, present, and future, have the benefits of the most effective mentoring relationships they possibly could. I believe more than ever that mentoring is a God-given, God-directed grace for new pastors. I enthusiastically desire to see as many new pastors as possible receive such grace in abundance. May all of the Joshuas out there have their Moseses, the Marys their Elizabeths, the Sauls their Barnabases, and the Timothys their Pauls!

**APPENDIXES**

A. Survey/Interview Schedule and Questions

**NEWER PASTORS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

You have been selected for this interview today because you are a graduate of the Christian Ministries program at Bethel University and are currently serving in vocational pastoral ministry. This research project is focused on identifying best practices for mentoring during that season of transition from academic experiences at the college level and the experience of ministry practice.

1. How long have you been in your present ministry role?

2. Describe for me your current ministry role.
[Probes – Tell me more about what you do.]

3. In what ways has ministry been different than you expected based on your classroom experiences in college?
[Probes – Could you give me an example? Tell me more about that.]

4. Tell me about the challenges that you have faced in ministry when it would have been or is helpful to have the perspective and wisdom of a mentor to provide counsel and direction.
[Probes – Could you explain a bit more about that?]

5. On what subjects or issues would a mentor have been especially helpful to you?
[Probes – Why? What about that subject would make a mentor helpful?]

6. Give me an example (or several examples) of times when you have found the counsel and wisdom of a mentor to be helpful in your ministry. And then, what made it helpful?

7. Let me invite you, then, to step back and reflect on what a mentor has done and how a mentor has done things that have been helpful to you. What has a mentor done that you have found especially helpful?

8. What things that a mentor has done have been unhelpful or have hindered your experience of mentoring in ministry?
[Probes – Why? Could you get even more specific about what made that unhelpful? Tell me more about that.]

Thanks so much for your time and the perspective you have shared from your experience. The information you have provided will help in this research project on identifying best practices for mentoring during that season of transition from academic experiences at the college level and the experience of ministry practice.

**NEWER PASTORS FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**

**Welcome and Purpose**

Welcome! And thank you for your willingness to participate in this focus group about mentoring of pastors in their first few years of ministry. My name is Keith Koteskey, and I will be facilitating the group. I am working on a research project for my dissertation in the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Asbury Theological Seminary. This focus group is one instrument in a research study which purposes to identify best practices for multi-generational mentoring of graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University (IN) in the first few years of full time, vocational pastoral ministry. The answers you provide in your responses will help in this effort.

**Confidentiality and Data Security**

As a reminder, this session is being recorded so that the data collected here can be analyzed later. The recording of this meeting will not be shared with others. The recording of this focus group session will be transcribed later, but participants will not be identified by name. In the data analysis and data reporting of this study, no participant names will be identified. In addition, because this protection of confidentiality is important to my study and so that everyone may feel comfortable to speak freely, I do ask that you not share any of the responses of others in today's session with anyone else. If there are any questions or discussion that you do not feel comfortable answering or participating in, you are not obligated. However, I do appreciate the insight that you can provide by participating as fully as you feel comfortable.

**Process**

Just a few things to remember that will make our discussion most helpful in addressing

the purpose of this research study:

It is helpful to have only one person speaking at any time. Please try not to interrupt

another speaker. When they have finished, you should feel free to respond.

I will not require you to respond to questions in a particular order, nor are you required to

respond to any particular question.

Participants are invited to freely and respectfully disagree and you will not be asked to

reach consensus on anything. Deep critical reflection on, and open discussion about, your

experience is encouraged. This is a time when everyone should feel free to express their

own opinions and perspectives.

Does anyone have any questions? (answer any questions, clarify as needed)
If not, let's get started…

**Questions**
1. To begin with, let's take a moment to introduce yourselves, providing your name, the place where you currently serve in ministry, the particular role in ministry in which you serve, and how long you have been in ministry since completing your degree at Bethel…

2. Have you had a mentor in your early years of full time, vocational ministry? If so, how did that mentoring relationship get started?
[Probes – Tell me more about that. What prompted you or your mentor to do that?]

3. In what ways has your experience in ministry been different than you imagined or expected based on your classroom experiences in college?
[Probes – Could you give me an example? Tell me more about that. Surprises? disappointments? Unexpected difficulties?]

4. Tell me about the challenges that you have faced in ministry when it would have been, was,  or is helpful to have the perspective and wisdom of a mentor to provide counsel and direction.
[Probes – Could you explain a bit more about that?]

5. On what subjects or issues would a mentor have been especially helpful to you?

[Probes – Why? What about that subject would make a mentor helpful?]

6. Give me an example (or perhaps several examples) of times when you have found the counsel and wisdom of a mentor to be helpful in your ministry. And then, what made that helpful? In what particular ways were mentors most helpful for your personal growth or professional development?
[Probes – Specifically what made that so helpful to you? Explain a bit more.]

7. When, if ever, did you find the guidance of a mentor counterproductive, or when did a mentor fail or disappoint you in some significant way? Can you provide specific examples?
[Probes – Why? Could you get even more specific about what made that unhelpful? Tell me more about that.]

8. If you were to design an ideal mentoring process what qualities or practices would it include?
[Probes – Explain a bit more? Why do you think that would be important?]

And that will bring our time today to a close. Thanks so much for your participation in this focus group on best practices in mentoring of pastors. Your perspectives and experiences are valuable to this research project! As a reminder, the data gathered from this focus group will be used to help identify best practices for multi-generational mentoring of graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University (IN) in their first few years of fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry. I am grateful for your help in that effort! Blessings on your ministry!

**EXPERIENCED PASTORS FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL**
**Welcome and Purpose**

Welcome! And thank you for your willingness to participate in this focus group about mentoring of pastors in their first few years of ministry. My name is Keith Koteskey, and I will be facilitating the group. I am working on a research project for my dissertation in the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Asbury Theological Seminary. This focus group is one instrument in a research study which purposes to identify best practices for

multi-generational mentoring of graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at

Bethel University (IN) in the first few years of fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry. The

answers you provide in your responses will help in this effort.

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**Process**

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reach consensus on anything. Deep critical reflection on, and open discussion about, your

experience is encouraged. This is a time when everyone should feel free to express their

own opinions and perspectives.

Does anyone have any questions? (answer any questions, clarify as needed)
If not, let's get started…

**Questions**
1. To begin with, let's take a moment to introduce yourselves, providing your name, the
place where you currently serve in ministry, the particular role in ministry in which you
serve, and how long you have been in ministry since completing your degree at Bethel…

2. As you think back to your earliest days of ministry right after your college or seminary
experience, did you have a mentor? If so, how did that mentoring relationship get started?
[Probes – Tell me more about that. What prompted you or your mentor to do that?]

3. Tell me about the challenges that you have faced in ministry when it would have been,
was,  or is helpful to have the perspective and wisdom of a mentor to provide counsel and
direction.

[Probes – Could you explain a bit more about that?]

4. Give me an example (or perhaps several examples) of times when you have found the
counsel and wisdom of a mentor to be helpful in your ministry. And then, what made that
helpful? In what particular ways were mentors most helpful for your personal growth or
professional development?

[Probes – Specifically what made that so helpful to you? Explain a bit more.]

5. When, if ever, did you find the guidance of a mentor counterproductive, or when did a
mentor fail or disappoint you in some significant way? Can you provide specific
examples? ? What could or should have the mentor done differently? What do you wish
your mentor would/would have done more or less of?

[Probes – Why? Could you get even more specific about what made that unhelpful? Tell
me more about that.]

6. What experiences have you had in mentoring other pastors? Give me some examples
of the practices you have especially helpful or effective in mentoring those pastors.

[Probes – Tell me more about that. Why did you do that?]

7. If you were to design an ideal mentoring process what qualities or practices would it include?

And that will bring our time today to a close. Thanks so much for your participation in this focus group on best practices in mentoring of pastors. Your perspectives and experiences are valuable to this research project! As a reminder, the data gathered from this focus group will be used to help identify best practices for multi-generational mentoring of graduates of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University (IN) in their first few years of fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry. I am grateful for your help in that effort! Blessings on your ministry!

**INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES SURVEY**

1. Informed Consent

**Bethel University**
**Informed Consent to Participate in Survey**

**Best Practices for Multi-Generational Mentoring of Graduates of Christian Ministry Degree Programs in the First Few Years of Vocational Ministry**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Keith Koteskey, Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries at Bethel University (IN) and a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. This study seeks to identify best practices for mentoring of Christian Ministries graduates in their first few years of ministry. You are invited because you teach and/or advise ministry students in a Christian institution of higher education.

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete this online survey that will take approximately 15 minutes.

This is an anonymous survey. Neither your name nor any other identifiable information will be associated with your answers.

Confidentiality of all participants will be carefully protected. In the data analysis and data reporting of this study, no participant names will be identified. Data will be compiled and stored on SurveyMonkey using SSL encryption and on computer hard drives only in the possession of the student conducting the research. The raw data will not be shared with anyone else.

There are no substantial risks to you in participating in this study. Although the study will not benefit you directly, the information you provide will help inform efforts to improve mentoring experiences for graduates of Christian Ministry degree programs in their first few years of vocational ministry.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Keith Koteskey:

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Your participation in this study is voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

Agreeing to continue this survey means that you have read this or had it read to you, have had an opportunity to ask questions concerning this research, and that you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.  If you do not want to be in the study, simply select to decline participation below.

Yes, I would like to continue the survey. [moves to the next questions]
No, I decline to participate in this survey. [moves to exit screen using skip logic]

[Exit option for declining to participate:
Thank you for considering participation in this survey. Blessings!]

2. Are graduates from your ministry degree programs formally matched with a mentor for the first 1-3 years of their work in fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry.
Yes
No

3. [if yes] [open-ended question]
Could you briefly describe the process by which this is done?

4. Do you encourage pursuit of mentoring following graduation specifically in a class in your ministry degree programs?

Yes
No

5. What practices do you and/or your colleagues encourage for graduates in their first few years of fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry?
- Taking the initiative in finding a mentor on their own.

- Building trust in a mentoring relationship through progressive self-disclosure between mentor and mentee

- Affirmation and encouragement in current ministry situations

- Mutual reflection on specific ministry experiences and strategizing about similar future experiences

- Observation and reflection on the modeling of ministry practices by a mentor

- Considering the use of mentoring via electronic/internet means – Zoom, phone, Skype, email, etc.

- Seeking out mentors from different levels of experience in ministry (e.g., 5, 10, 15, more years of experience in ministry)

- Affirmation and encouragement regarding long term potential effectiveness in ministry

For each item in question #5, respondents can select:
Taught/Encouraged in a class
Encouraged in faculty mentoring
Encouraged in printed or electronic materials given/sent to graduates
Encouraged by other means
Not specifically taught/encouraged

6. Do you utilize a cooperative program, working with denominational officials, to formally match graduates of our ministry degree program with mentors in ministry?

Yes
No

7. Do you follow up with alumni after graduation to encourage mentoring or to find out if graduates have initiated a relationship with a mentor?

With every graduate

With some graduates
With no graduates

[open-ended question]
8. What challenges do you find that graduates of your ministry programs face in their first few years of full time vocational pastoral ministry?

[open-ended question]
9. What do you and your colleagues do to facilitate mentoring of graduates from your ministry programs in their first few years of full time vocational pastoral ministry?

Thanks so much for your participation in this survey about mentoring of pastors as they transition from academic preparation to their first few years of vocational ministry. The information you have provided is valuable to this research project! The data gathered from this survey will be used to help identify best practices for multi-generational mentoring of graduates of Christian Ministries degree programs in their first few years of fulltime, vocational pastoral ministry. Blessings on your work in preparing students for ministry!

B. Informed Consent Letters/Forms

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – NEWER PASTORS INTERVIEWS

**BETHEL UNIVERSITY**
**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

**Best Practices for Multi-Generational Mentoring of Graduates of Christian Ministry Degree Programs in the First Few Years of Vocational Ministry**

You are invited to participate in a research study to be conducted by Keith Koteskey, Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries at Bethel University (IN) and a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. This study seeks to identify best practices for mentoring of Christian Ministries graduates in their first few years of ministry. You are invited because you are a graduate of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University and are in your first few years of vocational ministry.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher that will be 60-90 minutes in length. This interview will either be done in person in a confidential setting in your ministry context (church, office, etc.) or via Zoom. There is no payment given for participation in this study.

The interview will be recorded so that the data collected can be analyzed later. The recording of the interview will not be shared with others. It will be transcribed later, but participants will not be identified by name. Confidentiality of all participants will be carefully protected throughout the study. Likewise, in the data analysis and data reporting of this study, no participant names will be identified. Data will be compiled and stored on computer hard drives only in the possession of the student conducting the research. The raw data will not be shared with anyone else. For some interviews, Zoom may be used. Zoom conferencing is encrypted to protect sensitive information. That said, any internet-based communication is not 100% guaranteed to be secure/confidential. Every reasonable effort will be made by the researcher to implement security measures that reduce risks of any kind of confidentiality breach.

There are no substantial risks to you in participating in this study. Although the study will not benefit you directly, the information you provide will help inform efforts to improve mentoring experiences for graduates of Christian Ministry degree programs in their first few years of vocational ministry.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Keith Koteskey who can be reached at the address, email address or phone numbers listed below. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If participating in this study causes significant stress that requires additional help, participants are encouraged to contact the Care for Pastors 24/7 hotline at 352-728-8179, or visit their website at www.careforpastors.org.

You are free to ask any questions about the study or about being a participant and you may call or contact Keith Koteskey at the address, email address or phone numbers listed below if you have further questions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

*I have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask questions concerning this research, voluntarily consent to participate in this study, and have received a copy of this form.*

_____     _____
Participant's Signature              (Date)     Legally Authorized Representative  (Date)

                                         _____
                                         Relationship to Participant

*I have explained this study to the above participant, have sought his/her understanding for informed consent, and have provided him/her with his/her copy of this form.*

_____
Investigator's Signature              (Date)

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**INFORMED CONSENT FORM –FOCUS GROUPS**

**BETHEL UNIVERSITY**
**INFORMED CONSENT LETTER**

**Best Practices for Multi-Generational Mentoring of Graduates of Christian Ministry Degree Programs in the First Few Years of Vocational Ministry**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Keith Koteskey, Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries at Bethel University (IN) and a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary.  This study seeks to identify best practices for mentoring of Christian Ministries graduates in their first few years of ministry. You are invited because you are a graduate of the Christian Ministries degree program at Bethel University and are serving in vocational ministry.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in a focus with the researcher and several other Bethel University graduates who are also serving in vocational ministry. The focus group session will be 60-90 minutes in length. This focus group will be done via Zoom. There is no payment given for participation in this study.

The focus group session will be recorded so that the data collected can be analyzed later. The recording of the session will not be shared with others. It will be transcribed later by software, but participants will not be identified by name. Efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of focus groups participants throughout the study. It should be noted, however, that although confidentiality will be encouraged it cannot be guaranteed due to the presence of other participants. Given such risk, participants are cautioned against sharing anything that would affect their employability or reputation. In the data analysis and data reporting of this study, no participant names will be identified. Data will be compiled and stored on computer hard drives only in the possession of the student conducting the research. The raw data will not be shared with anyone else. For the focus group sessions, Zoom will be used. Zoom conferencing is encrypted to protect sensitive information. That said, any internet-based communication is not 100% guaranteed to be secure/confidential. Every reasonable effort will be made by the researcher to implement security measures that reduce risks of any kind of confidentiality breach.

There are no substantial risks to you in participating in this study. Although the study will not benefit you directly, the information you provide will help inform efforts to improve mentoring experiences for graduates of Christian Ministry degree programs in their first few years of vocational ministry.

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*I have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask questions concerning this research, voluntarily consent to participate in this study, and received a copy of this form.*

_____ _____
Participant's Signature          (Date)                 Legally Authorized Representative  (Date)

_____
                                            Relationship to Participant

*I have explained this study to the above participant, have sought his/her understanding for informed consent, and have provided him/her with his/her copy of this form.*

_____
Investigator's Signature          (Date)

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**INFORMED CONSENT – INSITUTIONAL PRACTICES SURVEY**


**Bethel University**
**Informed Consent to Participate in Survey**

**Best Practices for Multi-Generational Mentoring of Graduates of Christian Ministry Degree Programs in the First Few Years of Vocational Ministry**

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Agreeing to continue this survey means that you have read this or had it read to you, have had an opportunity to ask questions concerning this research, and that you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.  If you do not want to be in the study, simply select to decline participation below.

Yes, I would like to continue the survey. [moves to the next questions]
No, I decline to participate in this survey. [moves to exit screen using skip logic]

[Exit option for declining to participate:
Thank you for considering participation in this survey. Blessings!]

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