MENTORING IN A SEMINARY COMMUNITY

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During the past decade a paradigm shift has begun to take place both in the spheres of education and business. Ironically, the shift that is occurring is one to a model that has existed previously for years. The change involves moving towards the use of mentors to provide guidance and resources for those who may be new to a specified environment. Many businesses and educational institutions have discovered that the current system devoid of mentoring is not working effectively to incorporate and to train new members. As a result, a change has been made towards a "new way" of doing things which in reality is not a new way, but a way that has been tried and proven.

Towards a Definition of a Mentor

The term "mentor" has its roots in Homer's epic poem, "The Odyssey." In this myth, Odysseus was the great royal warrior who had been fighting the Trojan War. Because he was forced to leave his son, Telemachus, Odysseus entrusted him to a friend and advisor. The name of this trusted friend was Mentor. He was to serve as a guardian, advisor, and guide through life to his friend's son. As the story unfolded, Mentor accompanied and guided Telemachus on a journey in search of his father and ultimately in search of a new and fuller identity of his own.

Definitions for the term "mentor" abound. In various dictionaries, "mentor" is defined as "a trusted counselor and guide," or "a person who makes his personal strengths, resources, and

networks available to help a protege reach his or her goals." The mentor is also described as one who "helps another person succeed who has high leadership potential but less experience than the mentor."

A "mentee" is a person who receives the benefits of a mentor. Synonymous terms for mentee are protege and mentorand. These terms are used interchangeably with no suggested differences.

Mentoring has been designated as "a process of opening our lives to others, of sharing our lives with others, of intentionally living for the next generation."[1] Gordon Shea defined mentoring as "a relationship in which a person with greater experience, expertise and wisdom counsels, teaches, guides and helps another person to develop both personally and professionally."[2] In *The Mentor Handbook*, Clinton and Clinton gave a decidedly Christian perspective to mentoring as they defined the process as "a relational experience by which one person empowers another by transferring God-given resources . . . . Mentoring is a positive dynamic that enables people to develop potential."[3] In the further discussion of the idea of mentoring, the authors underscored the importance of mentoring when they stated that "a

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[1]Jack Ridlehoover, "Mentoring Traps To Be Avoided," *Church Administration* 38 (December 1995): 18.

[2]Gordon F. Shea, *Mentoring: A Practical Guide* (Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications, 1992), 15.

[3]J. Robert Clinton and Richard W. Clinton, *The Mentor Handbook: Detailed Guidelines and Helps for Christian Mentors and Mentees* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1991), 1.

Christian worker needs a relational network that embraces mentors, peers, and emerging leaders to insure balanced healthy perspective on life and ministry."[4]

For the purpose of this paper, a mentor is one who is willing to establish a relationship with an individual with the expressed intent or purpose of encouraging the personal development, professional development, and spiritual development of a mentorand. This process occurs as the mentor finds value in the life of a mentorand and is willing to make an investment in the life of this one. Therefore, a mentor is not a counselor, an advisor, a pastor, or a teacher, though these roles may be assumed throughout the mentoring process. On the other hand, the mentor is one who is willing to walk through life or a segment of life with a less experienced person. In the process of this journey, the mentor is to provide encouragement, guidance, and accountability. Perhaps the most important aspect of mentoring is the modeling through which a less experienced individual learns how to live successfully through the positive role model of a mentor. In a simplified manner, mentoring is investing one's life in another.

When the Christian perspective is added to this definition of mentoring, the foundational idea of mentoring becomes "biblical discipleship." Discipleship as described in the New Testament is more than just teaching or being taught. This idea of biblical discipleship involves the passing on of a way of life to another person through the process of teaching and through the process of living an example for the mentee. This strategy of intentionally living for another person occurs because of a calling of God upon one to invest one's life in another who is perceived to be of value and significance.

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[4]Ibid., 3.

The Historical Precedent

With the understanding that mentoring is discipleship, the biblical record provides a number of examples that serve as a precedent for mentoring. Perhaps the most obvious example is that of Jesus and the twelve disciples. The call of Jesus to the disciples was a call to "follow." Though certainly Jesus was demanding the disciples exhibit a true commitment, his call was also to a process of learning. Through time spent with Jesus as he began both to teach about and to model the new life, the disciples discovered the necessity of growth and development within their lives. In the daily experience of being with Jesus, they encountered a maturing process which was more than just intellectual. They did understand more about God through his teaching, but through his living they also understood more about the way these teachings were to be put into the practice of one's life. Jesus also gave them instruction and practice in various forms of ministry. When necessary he rebuked them, and on other occasions he exhorted them. As Jesus' physical life came to an end, he entrusted his ministry to those disciples in whom he had invested his life. They were now to continue the ministry in a manner similar to that which Jesus had demonstrated for them. Thus, through mentoring, Jesus had prepared them to accomplish God's will for their lives.

Paul and Timothy serve as another example of the relationship of a mentor and mentorand. Paul invited Timothy to join him on Paul's second missionary journey. Through this experience, a relationship developed during which time Paul began the process of investing his life in the life of Timothy. The closeness of the relationship is seen in that Paul referred to Timothy as "my true son in the faith."[5] Timothy was able to hear as Paul taught, but also he was

[5]1 Tim. 1:2. The translations of biblical quotations in this paper are those of the writer.

able to see the life that Paul lived. Perhaps the greater lessons for Timothy came in the example of a life completely devoted to the work of Christ despite frustrations, persecutions, and personal challenges. Through this relationship, Timothy likewise began to develop the passion to continue the work that God had begun through Paul. The Pastoral Letters particularly reveal Paul's mentoring of Timothy as he provided guidance and encouragement in the midst of difficult and frustrating times. The advice given to Timothy was more than just facts or processes to follow; the advice was seasoned with the love that Paul had developed for Timothy, a love that appeared to be mutual. One can also sense that Paul had perceived within Timothy great potential and sought to help that potential to be realized. Though Timothy remained a unique individual with characteristics that he alone possessed, certain characteristics of Paul began to be developed in Timothy. These characteristics were not that of Paul, but of Jesus to whom Paul was seeking to be conformed. Perhaps a more clear understanding of this transfer could be seen in Paul's admonition to the Corinthians as he encouraged them to "follow my example, as I follow Christ's example."[6] The evidence of mentoring in Timothy's life was seen in his spiritual maturity, his preparation for and assuming of the ministry at Ephesus, and his love and devotion to God first and foremost. His love and devotion to Paul also served as evidence of the mentoring relationship.

Beyond the biblical accounts, history is full of numerous examples of the importance of mentoring. Doctors in rural areas were taught both the practice and the lifestyle of being a doctor through modeling and mentoring. Oftentimes the doctor would choose his successor and then would begin to invest time and effort in the training of this one who was to continue the practice.

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[6]1 Cor. 11:1.

Most manual labor skills during earlier days were likewise taught through mentoring. During the earliest colonial days in America, clergy were trained by this same methodology. Often a number of men who desired to be pastors would be invited into the home of a clergy member who would then teach both by lecture and by lifestyle. When Harvard and Yale began to rise to their current prominence, the trend in education in America for clergy began to shift from that of mentoring to a more formal, academic education. As noted by J. Bradley Creed, this shift in educational methodology was the center of a debate at the Triennial Convention in 1853. Francis Wayland, the President of Brown University, argued for a more practical oriented seminary education as opposed to a theoretical approach. He insisted that an apprenticeship system would provide a more valuable strategy for training a minister. In response to Wayland, Barnas Sears, former president of Newton Theological Institute and then Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, insisted that the best preparation for ministry was a post-graduate, formalized seminary education.[7] Perhaps this debate demonstrates the challenge felt throughout the history of theological institutions of the balance between the practical and the theoretical in the process of training those who have been called to participate in ministry.

The Need Today

In the midst of changing educational methodologies and technologies, why would one consider returning to a previous way of providing education? If one purpose of theological education is to aid in the formation of the person who is to be the minister, the shift in education must continue to include a renewed focus upon the person and not merely upon the dispensing of

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[7]J. Bradley Creed, "Transforming Initiatives for Theological Education" *Review and Expositor* 94 (Fall 1997): 495.

information. As faculty continue to grow intellectually in their respective competencies, the temptation is to become an "expert" in one area while overlooking the reality that students being trained for the ministry must learn to incorporate this information into a lifestyle. Creed noted, "Divinity school catalogs sometimes more closely reflect the concerns of academic guilds than they do the realities of ministry. Increasingly, theological educators are seeing the wisdom of their curricular decisions focusing on outcomes directed toward service in ministry."[8] Others have likewise discerned this troubling trend towards information as opposed to emphasizing the student. Jackie Smallbones after noting the failure of traditional education to change individuals wrote, "As I have perused and reflected upon the literature and experience of Christian Education, it seems to me that all our energy has been poured into reforming Christian Education per se, and very little into reforming the Christian educator her/himself."[9]

A further indication of the need for mentoring in theological training derives from an understanding of the ministry for which the students are preparing. This ministry is a personal ministry. If the education that is used to train the students does not provide the foundation for a personal ministry through both instruction and modeling, students can be misled or find themselves "under-developed" in this area. The transference of education into practice is a reality. Students put into practice much of what they are taught. They likewise put into practice the methods by which they are taught. If theological education is impersonal, the ministry of students who are trained in this type of impersonal environment may reflect this same approach

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[8]Ibid., 497.

[9]Jackie L. Smallbones, "Spiritual Director, Mentor, and Christian Educator," *Christian Education Journal* 16 (Fall 1995): 37.

to ministry. Through mentoring, the gap between theory and practice can be bridged to create a more complete and balanced education.

The Characteristics of a Mentor

By definition, a mentor is someone who is more experienced and who is willing to aid someone who is less experienced. In theological education, the assumption is that a mentor will be someone who is more mature in a personal Christian walk as well as in personal Christian ministry. Therefore, certain characteristics are necessary to be a successful mentor.

Mentors must be relational. They must be ones who are in a vibrant relationship with God. Mentors cannot succeed in leading mentorands to a deeper walk with Christ if they are not experiencing that same depth of the Christian life. Though this characteristic is difficult to measure, the mentors are able to discern for themselves the level of commitment within their lives towards a walk with God. The practice of the spiritual disciplines as well as the daily experience with God are basic indicators of the mentors' commitment. Included in this characteristic is the understanding that the mentors must be incarnational. For the mentorands, the mentors become a living example of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in the growing relationship with God, mentors must seek to embody the faith relationship that is necessary both for the Christian life as well as the Christian ministry. This embodiment is imperfect; yet through the imperfections the mentorands are also able to see the continued growth in the mentors which is in turn necessary for the personal lives of the mentorands as well. An imperfect mentor can serve as an encouragement for the mentorand as long as the mentor is willing to deal with the imperfections present in life.

In addition, mentors are relational because they must be able to relate well to individuals. Certain basic people skills and communication skills are necessary for the proper relationship to exist between mentor and mentorand, including an understanding of small group dynamics and the phases of a mentoring relationship. This characteristic involves the ability to ascribe to the mentorand value and to realize within the mentorand potential. Based upon the value and potential of a mentorand, the mentor discovers within oneself a willingness to make the necessary investment in a mentorand and become a mentor.

Mentors should embody other characteristics as well. They need to be people of humility. Within mentoring, pride has no place. Instead, the mentors should be willing to be open and honest concerning personal experiences and growth in godliness. Humility provides the necessary quality within their lives to understand themselves and likewise to understand the struggles of mentorands. A part of this characteristic of humility involves the willingness to be self-revealing. Therefore, transparency is another essential characteristic. This quality is difficult to achieve, yet necessary. A part of transparency is demonstrating for the mentorand that the mentor is still in the process of Christian growth and maturity. Humility encourages the mentors to be honest both in their understanding of themselves as well as in their encouragement of others. Mentors have a need to allow themselves to be human and to be recognized as such. Mentioned above was the fact that mentors are human and fail on occasions. Though this is true of all mentors, they must likewise seek to develop a consistency between their lives and their teachings. If the challenge of mentoring is to help students and others to combine both practice and theory, then the mentors have a need to be able to exhibit the result of successful integration. Even through the process of watching a mentor struggle and possibly fail,

tremendous lessons can be attained by the mentorand if the mentor is honest both with himself and with the mentorand.

Furthermore, the mentors should also embody the characteristic of commitment to this relationship with a mentorand. The commitment, if the mentoring is to be successful, should be one that places the relationship on such a priority level that few things, if any, interfere with the progressive, developing process. Perhaps the most basic characteristic of successful mentors is that they are willing to make the necessary sacrifices for the mentoring relationships. All mentors must believe in the process of mentoring, as well as the mentorands, to the point that the mentors are willing to pay the price of commitment. The process of mentoring is demanding. Not only emotional and spiritual strength is required, but the mentors are required to demonstrate their commitment by the giving of time. The mentors have a need to be available for the mentorands. Schnittjer noted, "If one enters into a mentoring relationship . . . the first demand it makes is probably on one's time. The teacher who rushes out quickly after class, [or] who is seldom available to students . . . is not likely to become a mentor."[10] This characteristic alone places a tremendous tension upon a mentor who is a faculty member because of the demand upon time. Only through the personal understanding of the importance of mentoring and a commitment to the process can this tension be dealt with, though the tension will never completely dissipate.

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[10]Gary E. Schnittjer, "The Ingredients of Effective Mentoring: The Log College as a Model for Mentorship," *Christian Education Journal* 15 (Fall 1994): 94.

The Roles of a Mentor

The persons who fulfill the function of being mentors will assume several different roles throughout their process of mentoring. The roles are fluid and will change according to the need of the student, as well as the experiences of both the mentorand and the mentor. In the following paragraphs, various roles are listed that the mentor may assume throughout the mentoring process.

Teacher. The mentor is one who is intentionally involved in the process of education. Though not the primary purpose of mentoring, each mentorand seeks information from the mentor. The challenge of the mentor is not just the passing on of information but encouraging the mentorand to incorporate the knowledge into skills and into a lifestyle.

Encourager. The mentor likewise is one who spends much time and energy encouraging. As the mentorand faces new or frustrating situations, the mentor "wants the mentee to fully realize his or her potential . . . ."[11] This potential is often realized through the encouragement provided by a mentor.

Guide. "A guide is a person who journeys through life with another, pointing out landmarks, modeling alternatives, supporting choices, and interpreting life events."[12] In the spiritual sense, the guide is one who is leading on the journey towards Christlikeness and towards fulfillment in accomplishing the will of God. As a part of the role, the guide not only provides

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[11]Leona M. English, *Mentoring in Religious Education*, (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1998), 8.

[12]Sondra Higgins Matthaei, "Faith-Mentoring in the Classroom," *Religious Education* 86 (Fall 1991): 541.

guidance and direction, but the guide is likewise to correct when the mentorand becomes distracted or begins to develop habits or qualities contrary to that of Christ.

Counselor. Though not necessarily a professional counselor, the mentor at various times will assume the role of being a counselor. The most important skill of a mentor as a counselor is that of listening. Many mentorands are simply seeking someone who will listen with concern. The role of counselor requires the mentor to listen carefully and to offer answers or suggestions based upon careful reflection. On occasions, the mentor as a counselor will come to the realization of the necessity of encouraging the mentorand to seek further assistance from a professional counselor.

Modeling. "A faith mentor is a person who, by word, action, and presence, models a meaningful lifestyle, clarifies important life issues, and provides guidance for deepening spirituality in a caring and accepting environment."[13] This role is closely associated with the characteristic mentioned previously of humility which leads to transparency and honesty. To fulfill this role, the mentor by necessity allows his life to be accessible both through transparency and through an openness that allows the mentorand to spend quality time with the mentor.

Sponsor. As a sponsor, the mentor "gives the mentee entree into the profession and becomes a sponsor and guide on the mentee's vocational journey."[14] In the setting of a theological seminary, the mentor as sponsor aids in the process of both discovery of ministry and introduction of a mentorand into that ministry. The mentor, therefore, provides wise counsel, encouragement, and support.

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[13]Ibid., 542.

[14]English, 8.

The Process of Mentoring

For successful mentoring to occur, the mentor must understand the necessary characteristics and roles. In addition, the mentor must understand the process of mentoring, especially the stages through which mentoring passes. Kathy Kram noted that mentoring occurs in four stages of development.[15] For a successful mentoring process to occur, all four stages are necessary. These stages are fluid with some being accomplished in a short amount of time, while others occur over years. In addition, each mentoring relationship will pass through the stages in differing amounts of time.

The first stage is that of *initiation*. During this stage the mentoring pair familiarize themselves with one another and begin the process of discerning the roles of both the mentor and mentee. This phase develops within the participants a need to spend a considerable amount of time together, both formally and informally. Also, the ability to communicate with each other is developed during this stage. In addition, the quality of trust is either formed or forfeited. The mentee has a need to perceive the characteristic of commitment in the mentor for this stage to be successful.

The second stage is the *cultivation* stage. A deepening of the relationship occurs during this stage as the mentor and mentorand continue to work on communication skills and strengthening the relationship. Also, the mentorand begins to allow the mentor to delve more into personal issues that have become apparent during the earlier stage. This stage is the one that produces the most personal and corporate growth. Due to the nature of the happenings of this

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[15]For a more detailed discussion of the stages of development, see Kathy E. Kram, "Phases of Mentor Relationship," *Academy of Management Journal* 26 (1983): 608-25.

phase, this is also the most difficult. The timing of this stage can neither be set nor predicted. Accountability plays a major part in this phase as the mentor challenges the mentorand to deal with issues present in life. In addition, the mentor by means of accountability likewise challenges the mentorand to continue to grow both spiritually and personally during this time. Depending upon the development of the depth of the relationship during the initiation stage, this most important stage of cultivation may be encountered quickly or not at all.

The third stage is the *separation* stage. During this stage, a gradual distancing occurs between the mentor and the mentee. Most formal mentoring that occurs at an educational institution has an ending date, whether set by a covenant between the mentor and mentorand or set by the institution according to the academic calendar. The separation stage allows for the proper closing of relationships so that a healthy friendship can continue between the mentor and mentorand. Without this stage, the entire process of mentoring can be viewed as a failure because of the lack of completion or closure of the mentoring.

The final stage is that of *redefinition*. During this stage, the mentorand moves from being a student or mentee to that of being a friend. The mentee may also move to the level of being a colleague. This final stage may or may not be reached by the participants. Occasionally, this stage is reached only after a number of years pass during which time the relationship between the mentor and mentorand continue to develop.

A Proposal for Incorporating Mentoring at NOBTS

After the discussion above about issues such as characteristics and roles of a mentor, one might ask, “How does mentoring fit into the context of a seminary community?” Much of what

has been discussed above occurs on an informal level between professors and students, as well as between students and other students. The writer of this paper is the product of the informal mentoring of two professors during his time at seminary as a student. The challenge this writer hopes to address is the fullest use of mentoring as a ministry tool at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The writer of this paper would like to encourage a three-fold process of mentoring to be developed. This three-fold implementation would aid students in their continued development towards spiritual maturity, aid the church in the continued development of ministry leaders, and aid the seminary in the continued integration of new faculty members into the seminary system as useful future mentors.

Formal Mentoring of All New Students by Faculty Members

Every student enters seminary with certain needs and anxieties in their lives. These needs may be relational, spiritual, professional, or personal. The anxieties may be due to a number of changes the student is encountering in the process of beginning formal study at the seminary. Therefore, the pairing of all new students with a faculty mentor would allow for some of these issues to be dealt with during the early days of seminary. This pairing would actually be the formation of a mentoring group that would be provided oversight by an appointed faculty member. Recently, the seminary faculty voted to begin the implementation of this process of mentoring through the requirement that all new students participate in a mentoring group led by a faculty member.

The formal mentoring of a new student by a faculty member is dependent upon several factors. First, the faculty must be willing to accept the assignment and understand the challenges

and demands of mentoring. The mentoring of a group of students cannot be viewed as simply another task to be completed or another course to be taught. Instead, the challenge of mentoring must be accepted as one of investing one's life in the life of a group of students through the mentoring process. Second, the faculty members who participate must meet the minimal qualifications described in the section above on the characteristics of a mentor. These qualifications by necessity allow for each faculty member to have the right to exclude oneself from the mentoring process due to personal issues or concerns. A comprehensive requirement for all faculty members to participate overlooks the necessary qualities needed within a mentor. Third, the faculty members who participate in the mentoring process should be trained regarding small group dynamics. Though many faculty members have the ability to communicate by means of a lecture, the work of mentoring in a small group is quite distinct from other forms of teaching, especially if the four stages mentioned above are to be encountered. Fourth, faculty members should be well advised concerning the specifications of the mentoring program. The faculty mentor needs to know the requirements of the course, the desired student outcomes, and the proposed process for the course. Also, processes for dealing with disruptive behavior and problematic mentorands should be discussed. Fifth, the administration of the seminary must recognize this pursuit of mentoring as being of value so that this value is communicated into a tangible portion of one's teaching load. If mentoring is done in a thorough and complete manner, the mentoring will certainly encompass more than a one hour block of time once a week. Sixth, a process of assignment and introduction should be developed that is inclusive of all students. This process should likewise clarify the expectations of the mentoring program for the students so that all are basically experiencing the same throughout the semester, while giving enough

leniency for groups to progress at different speeds. Included in this introductory process should also be the explanation of a process to deal with difficulties such as a mismatched mentor and mentorand. Seventh, realizing the demands upon a faculty member who is spiritually mentoring a group of students, spiritual care should be provided for the faculty members. This care should include special encouragement both for the process of mentoring and the process of personal growth. Through spiritual retreats, use of faculty meetings as a time of spiritual encouragement and challenge, providing opportunities of worship, and personal encouragement, the care process can be developed to help the faculty member continue to be equipped as a mentor. Eighth, careful evaluation of the program and the mentors should occur so as to note strengths and weaknesses of both. A part of being a mentor is a willingness to learn from the process of mentoring. Through the process of evaluation, the mentor may recognize personal skills that need further refinement in order to continue to be effective in the process of mentoring.

In the College of Undergraduate Studies of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the number of faculty members is insufficient to support such a plan. An alternative plan could include the use of senior students to mentor new students. For this process to succeed, several factors must be considered. First, the students who participate as mentors must meet the qualifications mentioned above and should be trained. An application and screening process should be developed to aid in the selection of students who qualify to be mentors. A part of the training process can include a retreat before the academic year begins to equip the student mentors for the upcoming year. Second, realizing that students who are participating as mentors have needs to be encouraged and mentored, the mentors should be included in mentoring groups in which they are mentored by a faculty member who is likewise qualified. Third, since most

students have complicated and demanding schedules, academic credit should be given to those students who participate as mentors. This academic credit would serve both as an incentive and a reward for qualified students to participate in the program. Fourth, a careful program would need to be developed in order to insure that all students are experiencing the same basic mentoring. Fifth, a director would need to monitor the program to insure that the mentors follow through on their commitment, that the quality of the program remains high, that difficulties are dealt with appropriately, and that evaluations are given proper attention.

Informal Faculty-Student Mentoring

When faculty members serve as mentors, relationships with certain students will develop. God often draws discerning faculty members towards specific students with potential or with a strong desire for spiritual growth. These relationships may be the direct result of the mentoring group or may be the result of contact between a student and faculty member through some other contact such as a class. The faculty members must feel a sense of freedom in pursuing these relationships in order to mentor students further. Though this mentoring is not done for academic credit on the student's part nor as a part of a teaching load on the faculty member's part, the process of continued mentoring defines the ministry of a professor who is seeking to prepare students not just academically but spiritually for the journey of life. Perhaps these informal mentoring times allow the mentor to move the mentorand to new depths of self-discovery and spiritual growth. In order for this to occur, the faculty member must realize the demand of this process. The greatest demand placed upon the faculty member who assumes this informal role of mentor is that of time. With the realization that the process requires a

considerable investment of time, the mentor needs to take care while making commitments to students and to be certain that commitments are made with clear expectations expressed. These expectations include the amount of time to be spent together in the mentoring process as well as a possible time frame for beginning and ending the relationship. Of course, an open ended relationship allows for the work of the Spirit to be continued by means of the mentoring relationship throughout a lifetime. The demand of time is high, and the mentor must be willing to make the necessary commitment. Because of the demands of this type of mentoring, the mentor should be cautious in over-committing to a number of students. This type of mentoring should be limited by the quality time available by the mentor. The administration could encourage faculty participation in an informal mentoring process by recognizing this as a valid part of the ministry of teaching. With the necessary demands placed upon a professor because of classroom preparation, lecturing, administrative responsibilities, and writing, other opportunities for ministry may be overlooked unless they are recognized as a part of one's annual evaluation. Through recognition of this process on year-end evaluations, the entire process of informal mentoring could be encouraged. In addition, the proper administrators could seek opportunities to encourage those who have chosen to invest their time in the informal mentoring process.

Faculty Peer Mentoring

James R. Coffman, Provost of Kansas State University, noted in a recent report that the KSU Task Force to Review Appeals and Grievances had completed a survey of 123 faculty members who were on a probationary track or who had recently received tenure. In the survey, fifty-five percent stated that they had received a moderate amount of mentoring by the faculty in

their department while thirty-eight percent responded they had received a low amount of mentoring. Thirty percent responded that they had received a high percent of mentoring. Based upon the survey, the majority of faculty members who responded expressed a disappointment in the present system of mentoring new faculty members which is an informal system. The task force also reached the following conclusions:

1. New faculty may have lower self-confidence about their chances for success, and benefit from strong relationships with senior faculty.
2. The faster new colleagues are brought up the learning curve, the more productive and valuable they are in helping achieve the department's mission.
3. Mentors can create a more conducive climate to help new faculty achieve success through a smooth transition to a new institution and through continued development of the team concept.[16]

The third proposed method of mentoring possibly to be incorporated into the seminary setting would be that of peer mentoring among faculty members. The difference between this mentoring and that previously stated is that this is peer oriented. The mentor would be recognized as someone with equal status in the organization. If the status is higher organizationally than the one being mentored, the position of the mentor would be recognized as having nothing to do with the qualification of the person to be a mentor. Instead, the mentor is qualified based upon number of years of service at the institution. The mentor is able to aid the new faculty member to become introduced and integrated into the new seminary environment based upon the number of years of service and experience. A formal plan of mentoring new faculty members would insure that all faculty members have the opportunity to benefit from such a system. This process would also allow for the new faculty member to have someone to contact

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[16]Faculty Mentoring and Development (web page on-line) (Kansas State University, accessed April 2, 1999); available from http://www.ksu.edu/provost; Internet.

and begin the process of assimilation even before the new position is assumed. Another goal for this type of mentoring would be the modeling by the mentor for the mentorand of behavior conducive to ministry at the particular institution. This process of faculty mentoring would also provide immediate access into the discipline of one's teaching assignment. For professors who have previously not been on a faculty, this process would aid in the transition from graduate school to the faculty. The mentor could also provide emotional and psychological support during the times of transition. The faculty peer mentoring would be an open ended agreement with the mentor having the freedom to terminate the mentoring relationship when the objectives of integration and assimilation are completed.

The Conclusion

Mentoring has the potential to be a useful ministry tool in a seminary environment. Throughout history, the process has been demonstrated to be effective in producing those who are not only trained, but are qualified personally for a specific task. The ministry for which a seminary is preparing individuals is a high calling that requires preparedness. Mentoring makes the preparation for ministry personal and takes theological education to the next level.

For a mentoring program to be successful, the challenges of mentoring mentioned above must be addressed. Only qualified faculty and students should be allowed to participate in the program. Once a person has agreed to participate in the mentoring process, the mentor should be introduced to the roles, phases, and processes of mentoring.

The three-fold process of mentoring makes a statement about the importance of personal ministry both in the context of the seminary and in the context of a student's ministry. Through

the mentoring, faculty and students alike are poised to receive benefits in the areas of personal, professional, and spiritual growth. Perhaps, this approach to ministry, and particularly to theological education, holds the key to reviving the church that has reach a plateau or is declining.

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