

A Study of the Viability of Reverse Mentoring as a Leadership Development Strategy for the Malawi Assemblies of God

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Abstract

Reverse mentoring is a topic that is receiving increased attention these days due to the rapid changes that technological advances are bringing about both in the community and in the workplace. This is the kind of mentoring where a younger or junior person mentors an older or senior person. (Meister & Willyerd, 2010: pp. 1-4) point out that the term indicates that in reverse mentoring, the roles of traditional mentoring are reversed: a less experienced person serves as mentor, and a more experienced person taking over the role of the mentee. The problem under investigation is: Is reverse mentoring a viable leadership development strategy for Malawi Assemblies of God? Such leadership development strategy must be applied to the church's socio-cultural and environmental context of pastors, elders, and members, including the youth. The rationale for this study is that if reverse mentoring is a viable leadership development strategy for the MAoG, then it must be tied to a contextual framework. For this reason, the values, behavioral practices, and perceptions of senior pastors, assistant pastors, student pastors, and elders/members of the MAoG must be taken into consideration to inform the viability of reverse mentoring as a leadership development strategy for the church. The article is based on a proposed study of the viability of reverse mentoring (RM) as a leadership development strategy for the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAoG). Part of this process is to have knowledge of what precedent literature says on RM. The question the study will answer is: What does the biblical and theological literature reveal about mentoring and reverse mentoring? This will be handled in two sections. The first section will examine what the Old Testament reveals about mentoring in general, and reverse mentoring in particular. It will explore the Pentateuch, the historical books, and the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The second section will explore what the New Testament reveals about mentoring in general, and reverse mentoring in particular?

It will examine the synoptic gospels and the epistles in the New Testament. The two sections will provide a biblical foundation for the decision to either consider or reject RM as a leadership development strategy for the MAoG. Christian leadership and relationships find their mandate and roots in the Bible. Biblical models of mentoring and reverse mentoring relationships will be highlighted, and the article will also explore Scriptures that support RM relationships.

Keywords

Reverse Mentoring, Mentoring, MAoG, Revelation, Relationships

1. Introduction

The article is based on a proposed study of the viability of reverse mentoring (RM) as a leadership development strategy for the Malawi Assemblies of God (MAoG). Part of this process is to have knowledge of what precedent literature says on RM. The question the study will answer is: What does the biblical and theological literature reveal about mentoring and reverse mentoring? This will be handled in two sections. The first section will examine what the Old Testament reveals about mentoring in general, and reverse mentoring in particular. It will explore the Pentateuch, the historical books, and the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

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2. What Does the Old Testament Reveal about Mentoring in General, and Reverse Mentoring in Particular?

2.1. Mentoring in General

God and Adam

Genesis 1:29 says, “Then God said, ‘I give you every-seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food’ and it was so.”

“God lovingly cares for the man he has made. He places him in a beautiful garden and provides for all his needs, including the creation of woman to be his

helper and companion. Adam and Eve are given great responsibility, but there is no doubt about who is ultimately in charge. It is God who sets rules. But his law is not oppressive; it is for their good” (Roberts, 2002: p. 32). God gave them responsibility but was teaching them the way they would relate with him and the rest of the creation.

(Baylis, 1996: p. 41) paints a good picture of God’s relationship with man in the Garden of Eden in his writing that reads, “Additionally, in his great kindness Yahweh designates all the trees in the garden as sources for food. Adam need not ask divine permission. He does not have to pray about it. This is his realm by God’s sovereign appointment. Of course, there is a minor restriction (2:17), but it is the abundance of provision that is stressed here.” God took it as his own responsibility to provide for the man in addition to mentoring him.

Baylis further states that the climax of God’s care for Adam was the gift of the procreative partner. The creation of humanity, both male and female, was the pinnacle of Genesis 1. Likewise, in recounting God’s care for Adam in Genesis 2, the provision of Eve is the final and very special provision ... but man, without this female partner forms an incomplete humanity—lacking true companionship and the ability to procreate. The creation of the woman was so crucial that it was preceded by a heavenly discussion (Gen. 2:18).

Again, Roberts paints a good picture of God’s relationship with Adam when he writes that it is an idyllic picture of the good life: life as it was meant to be. We see in the Garden of Eden a pattern of the kingdom of God. God’s people, Adam and Eve, live in God’s place, the Garden of Eden, under God’s rule: as a result, they enjoy God’s blessing. Sadly, it is not long before everything is spoilt by human sin.” Adam and Eve enjoyed fellowship with God, even having direct communication on matters of their conduct and relationship with him.

Adam was the first man on earth and knew nothing concerning God’s creation and how it must relate with him. He had to learn about it from God himself because there were no other human beings who could act as his teachers or mentors. Adam could not please God without being instructed in his ways. Therefore, God took it upon himself to instruct Adam in the ways of loyalty and obedience.

The Bible makes no attempt to reconcile God’s exhaustive sovereignty and man’s freedom and responsibilities. Even if we are not able to harmonize them, they are not inherently contradictory. Moral freedom is the power to determine one’s own moral actions freely according to their own thought, judgments, inclinations, desires and character. The infinitely powerful and all wise God is able to determine the actions of men in a way that does not impinge on man’s moral freedom (Grudem, 2011: p. 21).

McGrath (1997) writes that the paradox of all this is that human beings were created in the image of God and thus with the freedom and ability to love and respect God. Yet this God-given freedom is abused, as human beings turn against their creator. Both in their acts and in their underlying motivation (Genesis 6:5),

humanity has fallen a willing victim to evil. Adam and Eve were created to be in fellowship with God and had the capacity to learn from God all that they could become had they obeyed God's command. They were given authority by God to rule over God's creation on his behalf.

The story of God's interaction with man in Garden of Eden gives the picture of a mentoring relationship between a mentor (God) and a mentee (Adam), which requires times of interaction. This interaction may have been a normal thing before the fall of Adam and Eve. It is very likely that God imparted a lot of knowledge to Adam that empowered him to become what God had ordained for him to become.

The trees appear to be a place where God used to meet Adam and Eve. The Bible tells us that the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:8-9). The implication of this verse is that the trees were also a place where God and the man had their usual interaction. Adam was expecting God to come as usual and decided to prepare for the encounter by covering his nakedness with fig leaves.

Roberts comments on the outcome of the man's act of disobedience when he writes that the punishment fits the crime. "Human beings turn away from God in rebellion and he turns away from them in judgment. The warm friendship they had enjoyed with God is now destroyed. When he draws near, they hide from him. God still comes looking for them."

It appears like a gloomy picture but God's mentoring relationships with people are yet to continue, sometimes through personal encounters between God and human beings, and at other times, through agents and visions/dreams.

Ferry (2011: p. 108) writes, "Adam had an intimate relationship with God as they walked in the garden, which God used to mold Adam for his role of dominant ruler upon the earth. God mentored Adam through the many hours spent with Him." Obviously Adam and Eve were familiar with the sound and voice of God, otherwise they would not have anticipated or recognized Him as He moved in the garden in the cool of the day.

Genesis 3:23-24 explains the tragic consequences of Adam's disobedience. God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden to keep them from eating of the tree of life and living eternally in their fallen state. However, punishing Adam and Eve was not the only thing God did. As a mentor he had earlier acknowledged them as co-workers or partners by approving the names Adam had given to all animals. "Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:19).

Moses and Joshua

The training relationship between Moses and Joshua can be categorized as fitting into the master—disciple pattern. Joshua was Moses' assistant. He observed

Moses at work and the way he related with God. Moses gave some tasks to Joshua and backed him up with divine resources of intercessory prayer. Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands” (Exodus 17:9).

After faithfully understudying the ministry of Moses, Joshua was now ready to take over the mantle. Thompson (1974: p. 292) wrote that Deuteronomy 31:14, 15, and 23 give a brief narrative referring to the formal commissioning of Joshua by God and acts as a framework for the introduction to Moses’ song. Thus, Joshua, like Moses, was personally commissioned by God Himself to lead the Israelites. Joshua’s faithfulness and humility under Moses produced in him greatness imparted on him by Moses.

“In the spring of 1406 B.C., E of Jordan, God designated Joshua as Moses’ successor (Num. 27:18). Moses charged him to faithfulness (Numbers 27:23; Deut. 31:23), committed the ‘song of admonition’ and other writings to him (Deut. 32:44; Exodus 17:14), counseled him on procedures (Num. 32:28; 34:17), and encouraged both new leader and people (Deut. 3:21; 31:3, 7). God himself warned Joshua of coming apostasy (31:14), but promised his successful accomplishment of the conquest (31:23; 1:38; 3:28). Upon Moses’ death, Joshua, as the oldest man in Israel... God assured him of victory, as he relied on the inspired book of Moses (1:6-9)” (Tenney, 1967: p. 450).

Joshua’s preparation for spiritual leadership was long—such preparation usually is. Josephus, the noted Jewish historian, believes Joshua was 40 years old at the time of the exodus. At the age of 80, God’s preparation of this man was completed. He was ready for his task” (Campbell, 1981: p. 7). Joshua’s preparation did not take place in a vacuum. God always uses willing vessels to mold his instruments. Moses was such a willing, available, and worthy vessel that impacted Joshua’s life for the great task of allocating Canaan to the children of Israel.

The story of Moses and Joshua gives a picture of a downward type of a mentoring relationship. Moses as the leader was concerned about Joshua’s success as an upcoming leader. All of us need to be concerned about those who are coming up behind us ... no matter what our age.

The story gives a picture of divine guidance in the choice of Joshua as Moses’ assistant. God was preparing Joshua to take over as Moses’ successor. Moses sent out Joshua as one of the spies who went out to spy out the Promised Land (Num. 13-14). Joshua came back with a good report when other spies were giving a negative and demoralizing report. Probably Joshua had been impacted by the faith of Moses in his dealings with the people, and his faithfulness to God.

Naomi and Ruth

The mentoring relationship between Naomi and Ruth appears informal and casual. However, God’s providence is evident as one goes through the pages of the book. Naomi and her Husband Elimelech left their land of Bethlehem (house of bread) in Judah, due to a severe famine, and settled in the land of Moab.

What happened to them in Moab would have been considered tragic had it not been for the wonderful ending of the story. Naomi's sons Mahlon and Kilion married Moabite women—Ruth and Orpah. In the course of time, Elimelech and the two sons died leaving three widows—Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. Eventually Naomi heard that the famine was over in Bethlehem; so, she decided to return. On the way, she pleaded with her two daughters-in-law to return to their parents' homes because their husbands were dead, and Naomi had no other sons to marry them.

Orpah agreed and returned but Ruth refused to return. She vowed that she was never going to forsake her mother-in-law. She decided to become part of Naomi's family. Back in Bethlehem, it was harvest time and Ruth relied on her mother-in-law to know what the Jewish custom was as regards gleaning from the fields.

Hess (1979: p. 36) writes this concerning Ruth's decision to follow Naomi, "Ruth said in effect, 'I don't care whether you can offer me any kind of life, or not. I will be content simply to stay with you all your life. I want to be buried where you are. Ruth did not even desire that her remains be taken back to Moab for burial.'" Ruth followed the advice and wisdom of Naomi in relating with a close relative of Naomi called Boaz. Naomi's relationship and the way she trained her was in line with the prevailing Jewish tradition whereby a parent was responsible for the informal training of his/her offspring.

"The initiative is taken by Naomi. *'My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, so that it may be well with you ...?' (3:1)*. Ruth needs to be able to have an assurance of protection. One of the blessings of redemption is 'entering into rest'. When blessing is guaranteed the beneficiary 'enters into rest.' There is such an assurance of blessing that the person receiving the benefits 'rests'—enters into total confidence that good things are at hand" (Hess, 1979: p. 36). Without the guidance of Naomi, Ruth would not have come to knowledge of this provision.

Gaebelein (1992: p. 535) has this to write concerning Naomi's role in using her experience to equip Ruth for an effective traditional encounter with Boaz, "Naomi further instructed Ruth to note where Boaz lay down and then to go in, uncover his feet, and lie down. She would then wait for Boaz to tell her what to do. Naomi probably had in mind that Boaz would recognize Ruth's action as an appeal to marry her as the next of kin." Naomi is able to guide Ruth because she has experiences of how the Levirate Law operates in Israel. She is thus qualified to mentor Ruth.

Ruth's passionate desire to follow Naomi is apparent in the words recorded in Ruth 1:16 - 17, "But Ruth replied, don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me."

Chapter 2:22 says, "Naomi said to Ruth her daughter in-law, 'it will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you

might be harmed’.” 3:1 says that Naomi her mother in-law said to her, “My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight, he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes.”

The result of this counsel was that Ruth won the heart of Boaz as a kinsman-redeemer and found rest under his shelter. Naomi was unmistakably a very effective mentor for Ruth. She empowered her to maximize the potential that God had destined her for. This is a perfect example of the power of mentoring relationships.

Elijah and Elisha

Elijah and Elisha were engaged in a master/disciple mentoring relationship. This is attested to by observers. 2 Kings 2:3 says, “The Company of prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, ‘Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?’” “Yes, I know,” Elisha replied, “But do not speak of it.” People recognized Elijah as Elisha’s master. It was a relationship ordained by God.

(Gaebelein, 1988: pp. 150-151) again comments on God’s call on Elisha as Elijah’s successor/student when he writes, “Since the key figure in Elijah’s threefold commission was Elisha, Elijah sought him out first. He found Elisha busily engaged in plowing (v. 19). Coming on him suddenly, Elijah threw his mantle over Elisha, a symbol of Elisha’s call to the prophetic office. Elijah himself continued on without a word. When Elisha was able to collect his wits, he ran after Elijah, asking only that he be allowed to take leave of his family.” Elisha recognized his call and was willing to submit to Elijah as his student and apprentice.

Elijah’s close association with Elisha over a period of time produced a transformation in Elisha’s life. He had observed Elijah perform miracles, he watched him interact and counsel both Jewish and heathen kings. He realized that Elijah did not interact with only Jewish people. This proved to him that God’s reign is not just over the Jewish nation but overall kingdoms of the earth.

Elijah’s ministry impressed a desire in the life of Elisha to minister in God’s power. This is the reason he requested Elijah to give him a double portion of the Spirit that was upon him (2 Kings 2:9b). The spirit that Elisha was referring to was actually the power of God that was manifest in Elijah’s ministry.

Much of the transformation in the life of Elisha resulted from his observation of Elijah’s activities more than what Elijah lectured to him. This is true of mentoring relationships, modeling is a very important tool by which values and virtues are caught by the mentee, rather than taught by the mentor. Through his observations, the mentee’s final life becomes more of a reflection of the life of his mentor.

2.2. Reverse Mentoring in the Old Testament

As explained earlier, reverse mentoring is a mentoring relationship in which a younger person mentors an older one, or a junior person mentors a senior. In

this type of relationship, the younger or junior person possesses knowledge or life experiences that the older or senior person doesn't have.

Joseph and His Brothers

The story of the relationship between Joseph and his brothers is very intriguing. Joseph had received a message from the Lord through dreams that he would become ruler, and his family members would bow down to him. His brothers did not like that, and wanted to block it at all cost.

In Genesis 37, Joseph's experiences with God began when his brothers threw him into a pit to die. However, they later sold him to some Ishmaelites who took him down to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard. "The Lord was with Joseph and he became prosperous; he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned (Gen. 39:2-4).

When we go through the chapters of the Bible, we see several examples people who had experiences with God that made them good mentors. Writing about the example of Joseph (Sale Jr., 1995: pp. 73-74) observes, "Joseph, was a head steward in the household of Potiphar, a high-ranking Egyptian army official. He was good at his job; he prospered and was liked and trusted by his employer. He earned respect and received promotions. The boss's wife was impressed by Joseph too, but in a different way. She made aggressive advances to him, not once but again and again ... Joseph recognized and stood by his obligation to his employer and to God in spite of the consequences." The key to understanding this statement is the fact that Joseph "recognized his obligation to God."

The account also shows us that because of entrusting everything he owned to the care of Joseph; the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessings extended to everything the Egyptian owned, including everything in his field. This gave the official, total confidence in Joseph and his God such that he did not concern himself with anything he owned, because he knew that everything was safe in Joseph's hands.

Joseph also had a negative experience in Potiphar's house because Potiphar's wife repeatedly attempted to persuade him to go to bed with her, but he resisted. She at one point tried to rape him but he managed to escape, leaving his jacket in her hand. This landed him in jail because the woman twisted the issue, and accused Joseph of attempting to rape her.

Joseph's dreams came to pass as recorded in Chapter 40:41-42, "So Pharaoh said, 'I put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh put off his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger, he dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck."

These events in Joseph's life gave him a platform to explain to others and encourage them about the great deeds of God. They exposed Joseph to God's di-

vine providence and his mysterious ways of doing things. Chapter 42 presents Joseph as the governor of Egypt, and his brothers going to him to buy grain, bowing down before him as his dreams had predicted.

Joseph's dealings with his brothers give an indication that he really had a heart that understood God's dealings with man. He did not treat them in the way they deserved. He showed them mercy, and had an opportunity to teach them the reasons they dealt with him the way they did.

Genesis 50 gives us a glimpse into the kind of relationship Joseph had with his brothers after the death of their father, Jacob. Verse 18 says that his brothers went and threw themselves down before him. They told him that they were his slaves—begging for mercy. Joseph's response had a touch of his personal experiences resulting from his long walk with God ... "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives".

We can safely deduce from verse 24 that Joseph, though younger than his brothers, acted as a father figure to his brothers, and later, his and their grandchildren. He made them know that the God of their forefathers would never forsake them, but keep and fulfill his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this verse he said, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Though he was younger than his brothers and parents, Joseph used his experiences with God as a divine resource to impact the lives of his brothers, and give them hope.

Josiah and Judah

Since it is possible for a person to mentor a group of people, Josiah reverse mentored the Jewish nation. The Bible tells us that he was eight years old when he became king over the Jews in Jerusalem. Some older kings had failed to lead the people in the fear of the Lord. But this young man, having come across the book of the law, was able to turn the hearts of the people back to God.

(Maxwell, 2002: p. 553) writes in his Leadership Bible, "As a leader goes, so go the people. Over and over in the history of Israel, we see that pattern repeated—for both evil and good. When young king Josiah heard the words of God's long-forgotten law, sorrow gripped his heart (2 Chron. 34:8, 15, 19-21). He tore his clothes in repentance and directed several godly men to petition the Lord to see what he needed to do." Josiah was young, but he had knowledge of the Lord through the book of the law. Therefore, he was able to mentor the Jewish people.

The story of the leadership of Josiah as a young king for Judah depicts a mentoring relationship where a younger person changes the lives of older people who had a need for a breakthrough. The major issue in this story is not the age or the position of the king. Rather, the important thing is the experience of Josiah with God's word. In other words, his encounter with the word of God gave him a platform to influence the Jewish nation for the Lord, and that made God

look upon them with favor. This benefited the nation of Judah from a reverse mentoring relationship with their young king.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar was the great king of Babylon. In fact, he was the one who had destroyed Jerusalem and had taken Daniel and his fellow Jews captive as prisoners of war. However, as we look at the events recorded in the chapters of the book of Daniel, we will discover the influence Daniel had on the life of the king.

In Chapter 2, the king had a strange dream that made him very anxious. He wanted his wise men, enchanters and astrologers to explain the dream to him before explaining its interpretation. They found that request very unreasonable because to them, no wise man or anyone else had the ability to explain to the king what he was demanding except the god's; unfortunately, their dwelling was not among men.

Verse 16 reads, "So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time that he might tell the king the interpretation. Daniel advised his friends—Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, to join him in asking for mercy from the God of heaven through prayer. God revealed the mystery to Daniel at night".

Daniel therefore, went to the king and explained the dream and its interpretation to him. This first encounter with the king had a great impact in the king's life. This can be seen in verse 46 - 47 that say, "Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him... The king answered Daniel, and said, 'Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and the revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret'."

The second time the king had a personal encounter with Daniel is recorded in chapter 4 of the book of Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar had another dream that made him very afraid and sought its interpretation. The impact of Daniel's influence on the king is evident in the king's words in verse 9, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the vision of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation."

Daniel explained and interpreted the dream to the king and the king sang a song of praise to God. Part of the praise song is recorded in verse 37, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways, justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."

This confession can only come from the mouth of someone who had encountered the great works of God. These encounters had taken place through Daniel's interaction with the king. It is obvious in this verse that King Nebuchadnezzar had a picture of the greatness of the God of Daniel. Daniel was able to influence the life of the king despite being a prisoner of war, in a foreign country.

(Porteous, 1962: p. 51) supports the view that the relationship between Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar took a reverse order of mentoring. He writes, "The end of the story shows us Nebuchadnezzar capitulating completely. He accepts Daniel's

interpretation without question and apparently offers Daniel divine honors. His payment of homage to Daniel might merely have meant the reversal of homage a subject was expected to pay to the king.”

Mentoring in General and RM in the New Testament

Mentoring in General

Jesus and his Disciples

Jesus modeled his mentorship around the master-disciple model. It can also be classified as the apprenticeship model that involves learning and teaching taking place in small groups (Cory, 2008: p. 6). This method calls for personal relationship, time, and effort. It was practical within the confines of a one-on-one relationship or a number of people who would constitute a learning group. At other times he ministered to a group while at other times, he ministered to individuals as opportunities presented themselves.

(McBride, 1990: p. 15) says this about Jesus’ mentoring relationships, “Jesus Christ is pictured as the greatest small group leader in history. He is our model. Eph. 5:1-2 admonishes us, ‘Be imitators of God ... and live a life of love.’ Clearly, the primary idea of the Apostle Paul is becoming Christ-like in our character. However, to focus solely on character formation is to catch only half of the author’s intent. We must also seek to imitate Christ’s walk—his behavior or actions that were marked by love.” One cannot mentor small groups without having genuine love for them. Jesus deployed various methods in his teaching. At times he used formal teaching and at other times he taught informally.

Linda Cannel also writes on this:

In reality, formal schooling and nonformal modes of education have coexisted for much of history. Prophet apprenticeships are described in the Old Testament. Socrates probed the minds of his followers through dialogue. Jesus, who probably went to school as a boy, later walked the countryside with his disciples, teaching them through formal discourse and informally through story, example, and experience. Martin Luther lived among the nonformal educational communities of the Brethren of the Common life for the period of grammar school (Cannel: p. 130).

Jesus had a mission—to establish his church by equipping a core group of people who would go out to make disciples of all nations. He came from the Father, and knew what the Father wanted to accomplish through his (Jesus’) redemptive work on the cross. He declared this in John 5:19 that reads, “Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; For whatever he does, the son also does in like manner. For the Father likes the Son, and shows him everything that he himself does ...’”

Mark 3:13-14 says, “And he went up on the mountain and called to him those he himself wanted. And they came to him. Then he appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.” These were the ones he designated apostles, and trained for the task of building his church.

McBride again writes on Jesus' small group teaching saying, "Finally, the small group was Jesus' method for leadership training. He devoted himself primarily to the task of developing a select group of men, the Apostles. His goal was to equip this small group of disciples to carry on the work of the gospel after he returned to the Father." As a mentor Jesus knew the importance of investing his time and divine resources into this select group in order to accomplish the goal.

(Riggs, 1968: p. 48) comments on Jesus' mentoring relationships with his disciples saying, "immediately Christ began his ministry; the first thing for him to do would be to assemble certain disciples whom he could train and use as co-workers." Jesus was not going to build his church by continuing as a rabbi and master of crowds; he was going to launch the church and go back to the Father. He therefore, had to mentor a core group that would perpetuate the work of building the church on the foundations he was going to lay.

Jesus taught them on mountainsides (Matt. 5). He gave them object lessons and illustrations, such as that of the little children that were brought to him in Mark 10:13-14, they watched him cast out devils and heal the sick. He also helped them to have personal experiences by assigning them tasks of preaching and casting out demons from people.

"Jesus used teaching as the chief means of training his disciples for the work of ministry. Although Jesus at one point called attention to children as an illustration of faith, his ministry was primarily to adults. The manner of Jesus' teaching was more informal than formal (Peterson, 1984: p. 19). The informal teaching was more caught than taught; the disciples saw Jesus' way of life and actions and were transformed into his likeness.

(Hendrix & Householder, 1977: p. 16) used a series of questions to emphasize the importance Jesus attached to mentoring relationships stating; "Why did Jesus spend most of his brief ministry with twelve men? Why did he not take advantage of his few years of ministry to preach and teach the masses of people? ... The noun *Mathetes*, (Disciple) implies personal participation in that which a teacher or experience may teach one." This was the reason why Jesus usually involved his disciples in practical ministry.

Acts 4:13 is a vivid picture of the kind of influence Jesus had made on the lives of the disciples. The verse reads, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."

What this verse means is that the disciples were so bold and able to perform great miracles that the only explanation was that they had been impacted by the life and mentorship of Jesus. When Jesus was alive, the religious leaders had one person (Jesus) to fight against. However, after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven, the Religious leaders had many disciples and believers to reckon with.

The time the disciples knew that Jesus was risen from the dead, became a turning point in their spiritual experience. It opened up myriads of opportunities of which they had never dreamed. "Their limited horizons were suddenly enlarged

in a way which developed into a world mission (Guthrie, 1975: p. 15).” Jesus is an example of what a mentoring relationship can produce. If a leader fails to establish mentoring relationships with others, he goes with his skills and leaves nothing to perpetuate his abilities. However, when he mentors potential leaders, he reproduces himself and the sky becomes the limit on how far his influence can reach.

Because of His careful planning and strategizing, Jesus was able to reproduce himself in the disciples. That is why they were able to multiply the works that Jesus had been doing during his earthly ministry, as he took them through their training. He had promised them that if they believed in him, they would be able to do the same, or even greater works that he himself, had done (John 14:12).

Gamaliel and Paul

The mentoring relationship between Gamaliel and Paul best fits the teacher-student pattern. Gamaliel was one of the high-class Pharisees in Israel. He was an eminent Doctor of the Law; grandson of Hillel and first of only seven rabbis to be given the title of Rabboni. Paul was one of his pupils (Tenney, 1967: p. 298). Gamaliel’s experience and great knowledge from his education, qualified him to be one of the great mentors of his day.

Teachers-disciplers have a great task of dedicating themselves sacrificially to the task. (Gangel & Hendricks, 1988: p. 298) wrote on this, “This commitment to be a living sacrifice is incumbent on every Christian student but must reside first in the life of the teacher-discipler. He in turn will encourage and exhort his student-disciples to offer their lives as living sacrifices. Such a commitment on the part of the teacher necessitates a regular, vital, devotional life, including the regular study of the Word of God. Jesus himself articulated clearly, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples’ (John 8:31)” Like Gamaliel, every discipler or mentor must have the experiences and the knowledge to impact the life of the student or mentee.

It is logical to say that one cannot give what one does not have. The mentor can only achieve as much in the life of the mentee as he himself has achieved in his own life. “Only as the teacher enriches himself in the Word of God as a disciple can he hope to impart to his students the reality of the need to consecrate their own lives to God, and the need to cultivate their own devotional experience (Gangel & Hendrix, 1988: p. 259).

Craig S. Keener writes this about Gamaliel:

(Keener, 1993: p. 389) wrote that the most prominent pupil of the gentile Hillel, was widely respected may be an understatement; he was probably the most influential Pharisaic leader of the time and held prestige as a Jerusalem aristocrat as well. He further explained that later rabbis extolled his piety and learning, and accorded him the title “Rabban”, which later belonged to the rulers of the Pharisaic courts. Josephus mentioned Gamaliel’s aristocratic son Simon, indicating the family’s power in Jerusalem. (The later tradition that Gamaliel was Hillel’s son is probably wrong).

As Gamaliel's product therefore, Paul had gained a high credential for himself. Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton refer to Gamaliel as a great teacher-mentor. They note that the central thrust of a teacher-mentor is to impart knowledge and understanding of a particular subject. Paul benefitted from these qualities that Gamaliel had.

Again, Stanley and Clinton emphasize the importance of the benefit of mentoring when they write that we have been mentored by teachers in areas like leadership, group dynamics, language learning, womanhood, child development, problem solution in groups, woodworking ... and handling the dynamics of change. They suggest that learning with a mentor is more focused and personal—and therefore, faster and often deeper.

In his testimony of self-defense before a great crowd in Jerusalem following his arrest, Paul said, "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today" (Acts 22:3). This testimony demonstrates that Gamaliel was someone people could proudly associate with. Sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, instead of sitting on a chair, entailed being Gamaliel's disciple.

Again, Keener (1993: p. 389) comments that People normally sat on chairs (or reclined on couches at banquets); and that sitting at someone's feet was taking the posture of a disciple... Paul probably began to learn the law around his fifth year and other Pharisaic traditions say around his tenth year, and was sent to pursue training to be able to teach the law sometime after turning thirteen. It appears that Gamaliel's methods of teaching Paul were both formal and informal.

(Zuck, 1998: p. 50) wrote that Paul's schooling equipped him to become an outstanding theologian and teacher. That his educational training included instruction at home, attendance at a synagogue school, and enrollment in advanced training under Gamaliel in Jerusalem to become a rabbi. He wrote that for this reason Paul became an all-rounder; he could handle theological issues, philosophical debates, and even sociological issues.

Gamaliel's impact on Paul's life and ministry is seen in his ability to argue with religious leaders. He was able to use logic as well as the word of God in offering apologetics, and against false prophets, false apostles, and heretics. He proved very effective in winning souls for Christ using his knowledge gained from both the Scriptures, and his association with Gamaliel.

Paul and Timothy

The relationship between Paul and Timothy was two-fold. First, their relationship took on the father-son pattern. In chapter 1 verse two Paul made it clear that he was writing the letter to "Timothy my son." "Apostolic authority and tender love are beautifully blended, for the apostle of Jesus Christ calls the addressee 'Timothy my genuine child in faith.'" (Hendriksen, 1983: p. 53). Paul saw himself as a father, charged with the task of empowering this young man for the Lord's service.

Hendriksen further noted that a great change had taken place in Timothy's life as a result of his relationship with Paul; especially during Paul's first missionary journey. Paul was Timothy's father in a secondary sense only; the apostle was functioning as God's instrument, so that God himself remains the real Father ... yet his ministers have a subordinate right to this title. Paul indeed acted as an instrument in shaping the ministry of young Timothy.

In his salutation, Paul declared grace, mercy and peace on Timothy. It is notable here that most of his other epistles do not include mercy in the salutation. Hendriksen's comment on Paul's use of this word here is that just as he demonstrated his genuine love for Timothy by calling him "my child", he demonstrated his "warm affection" which includes but not restricted to tender compassion. This was very important because Timothy was in a difficult situation.

Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus and one of the tasks for him was to stop some people who were teaching false doctrines. They were teaching myths and long, meaningless, genealogies. He faced hardships dealing with them because they were looking down on him because of his young age. God's tender love and compassion was needed at a time of need such as this.

(Stott, 1996: p. 38) wrote this concerning Timothy as a mentee of Paul, "So this is the profile of Timothy which we can construct from a number of Paul's references to him. He was young, diffident and frail. These three handicaps might have been thought to disqualify him from taking charge of the churches in and around Ephesus. But they endear him to us, and the grace of God was sufficient for his need: you then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1)."

Paul's affection and duty to train Timothy is seen in chapter 1 verse 18 where he wrote, "Timothy my child, I entrust to you this command, which is in accordance with the words of prophecy spoken in past about you. Use those words as weapons in order to fight well." As a mentor, Paul did not try to hide the fact that Timothy would face a hard task. However, he pointed out to him that there was a way of dealing with the challenges.

The other way Paul related with Timothy followed the co-worker pattern. Paul viewed Timothy as a peer, or an equal in the ministry. In 2 Timothy Chapter 2, Paul charged Timothy to fight the good fight of faith as a fellow soldier of Christ. Timothy was to join Paul in suffering for the sake of the gospel of Christ as a fellow soldier. Although Timothy was Paul's son in the Lord, he was also his fellow soldier in the war against Satan.

In the rest of the chapters of 2 Timothy, Paul addressed various issues and ways by which Timothy would handle them. He wanted Timothy to draw upon Paul's ministry experiences and examples in order to act as a good soldier of Christ. This was a more experienced and senior man (apostle) pouring his heart and imparting knowledge and experience on a younger and less experienced mentee. He was equipping and empowering Timothy for the task that awaited him in God's service.

Barnabas and John Mark

Gangel notes the mentoring relationships between Barnabas and John Mark that began after the split of the missionary team following the first missionary journey, offer one of the greatest New Testament examples of mentoring. He further emphasizes the fact that it is possible to learn many things from observing characteristics of people who appear to have successful ministries. Gangel further reports that what we will observe in such people's qualifications are not profound personality traits found only in some special people. What we will find are rather, common behaviors, which with the help of the Holy Spirit, every experienced leader can offer to upcoming leaders. Such was the kind of life Barnabas possessed, which impacted the lives of both Paul and John Mark.

Mentors need to be people that hold on to relationships despite some decisions mentees sometimes make. There are times when mentees behave and act in a way that is contrary to a mentor's expectations. This may sometimes disappoint and discourage the mentor. However, rejecting the mentees only leads him to self-doubt. Barnabas experienced this when he was mentoring John Mark.

In Acts (13:13; 36-38); when faced with hardships, John Mark dissented Paul and Barnabas. Paul refused to take John Mark along on his second Missionary journey. This led to a parting of ways between Paul and Barnabas. John Mark was a cousin to Barnabas (Col. 4:10). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first Missionary journey. It is also believed that Mark 14:51-52 is a reference to John Mark, "A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind".

This is a clear indication of what kind of person John Mark was when he was very young in the Lord. However, he like every believer was in the process of maturing in the Lord. He yet had to pass through life experiences and acquire knowledge of the Lord to become firm in ministry. Even after failing the Lord as a young man, and later failing Paul and Barnabas, he still grew to become a very helpful person to Paul. Paul's instruction to Timothy was, "Get John Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11; cf. Col. 4:10).

Because of his patience and belief that God's grace was sufficient for John Mark, Barnabas took him along as Paul went his own way. Some people have thought that Barnabas' ministry is never portrayed as making an impact in the world because of taking John Mark instead of accompanying Paul. David Smith observes that by the subsequent course of events, God adjudged the controversy, and his judgment was a vindication of Barnabas. Also, that a kinsman's generosity afforded John Mark an opportunity of purging his disgrace; and that he right nobly availed himself of it. This is confirmed when Paul, at the long last, ungrudgingly recognized. Every mentor must learn to give room to mentees for occasional failures.

Barnabas did not favor John mark for tribalistic or racial reasons. He did the same for the great Apostle Paul when all the apostles were unwilling to associate themselves with him, not believing that his conversion was a genuine one. Proba-

bly this was one of the reasons he earned himself the title “Son of Encouragement.” He was a man with patience; he believed in the potential that was in others. Barnabas also knew that sometimes people who fail at one point later become very instrumental in ministry.

Although not much is known in the Scriptures about the mentoring process between Barnabas and John Mark, the outcome of the process is not debatable. John Mark became very mature to the extent that one of the gospels (The Gospel of Mark) bears his name although no internal evidence suggests that he wrote it himself. (Keener, 1993: p. 132) shed more light on this when he wrote, “Early church tradition attributes this gospel to John Mark (Acts 15:37; Col.4:10; 1 Peter 5:17) who was said to have derived his information from Peter ... because there is no evidence against this attribution, Mark is the most likely candidate for the author.” This is what Barnabas achieved in the life of John Mark through his mentorship. (Clinton, 1988: p. 130) wrote that we most likely would not have the gospel Mark except for Barnabas’s mentoring attitude.

This should serve as a warning to leaders who have the task of mentoring others. Nobody should be labeled a failure or be disqualified from being a mentee on account of a mistake or a perceived failure. Almost every leader can testify that their mentors were patient with them even after making many mistakes. As a result, they rose up to become pace setters in churches today. Without Barnabas, John Mark’s usefulness would have been hindered.

It is important to take note that the apostle Paul made mention of Barnabas in cordial terms in his epistle to the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 9:6). (Longenecker, 2007: p. 956) quoted John Calvin and Martin Luther who were of the view that Paul was referring to Barnabas when he (Paul) wrote, “And we are sending along with him (Titus) the brother (probably Barnabas) who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.”

Paul and Onesimus

The model of mentoring relationship between Paul and Onesimus is not clearly described in the Bible. However, its results are unmistakable—a transformation in the life of Onesimus. Frank E. Gaebelien makes some observations that point to an effective mentoring relationship between the two. He observes that the occasion seems to be the return of Onesimus—a runaway slave. However, he wonders why a runaway slave would be referred to by Paul as a “faithful ... brother (v. 9). He notes that Paul usually reserved the word *pistos* “Faithful” for fellow workers who showed great determination and endurance in the service of the gospel. It is a word found frequently in inscriptions for a “trusted agent” or “commissioned one.”

Gaebelien further states that while in Prison, Paul had undoubtedly led Onesimus to Christ, as the words “my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains” (v. 10) show. We do not know how long the time Onesimus, following his conversion, spent with Paul before going back to Colosse. Evidently it was long enough to for him to become helpful to Paul (v.11) and to serve him in such a way as to lead to the affectionate expressions in vv. 12, 13.

Obviously Onesimus had observed Paul preach the gospel while being held as a prisoner in Rome. He saw Paul write letters to churches, encouraging and teaching believers to stand firm in the Lord. Onesimus was probably impressed by the faith and authority with which Paul carried out his ministry despite his chains. This is evident in his becoming helpful to Paul, and in his willingness to return to his former master—Philemon despite the possible consequences for his absconding as a slave.

In verses 8 - 19, Paul mentioned several things about Onesimus. He mentioned the fact that when Onesimus escaped from Philemon his master as a useless man; he was returning to him as a useful person to both him and Paul. Even though he was returning to Philemon, Onesimus was Paul's very heart; Paul would have loved to keep Onesimus with him, in the place of Philemon because he was helpful to him; Onesimus was returning to Philemon not just as a slave, but better than a slave—a dear brother.

Paul beseeched Philemon to welcome Onesimus back without regard to the wrong he had done on his escape. He pledged that if at all Onesimus owed anything to Philemon; Paul would take the responsibility of settling it. This is a very vivid picture of a man who had benefitted from a mentoring relationship with Paul. He was transformed into a useful vessel that God had destined for him.

3. Reverse Mentoring in the New Testament

3.1. Timothy and Believers in Ephesus

Timothy and the believers in Ephesus had a reverse mentoring relationship. After being mentored by Paul, Timothy had enough experience to mentor other people, even those older than himself. Paul had already charged him, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul's encouragement to Timothy in first Timothy 4:12 is an indication of the kind of people he was leading and teaching. They were much older than him and were probably looking down on him on account of his young age. “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example to the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”

Timothy's experiences with Paul had prepared him to be an able mentor. His experiences gave him divine resources with which he could empower the believers in Ephesus to be able leaders. As Paul wrote this epistle from prison, he was aware that his being put to death by the Roman Emperor was imminent. However, he was not worried about the work of the Lord in Ephesus because he was confident in Timothy's ability to be a mentor of the people there, including those older than he was.

3.2. Jesus and Nicodemus

Not much is known about the relationship between Jesus and Nicodemus. However, the brief story in the book of John and evidence from other sources indicates that Jesus played a great role in the transformation of the life of Nicodemus.

The Bible identifies Nicodemus as a man who belonged to the elite of the Jewish community. John 3:1, 2, say, “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no-one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him’.”

From Nicodemus’s statement in verse 2, it is apparent that he saw enough evidence that convinced him that Jesus came from God. He knew that Jesus was different from other teachers who were his contemporaries. Jesus had some powers that enabled him to perform great miracles.

For him to arrive at this conclusion, he most likely had followed Jesus secretly, observing what he was doing. He not only observed the great signs, but also heard Jesus teach (you are a teacher who has come from God). Nicodemus perceived that the teachings were in line with the Scriptures and were confirmed with signs and wonders. Nicodemus saw the hand of God in all that Jesus was doing and teaching.

We can therefore confidently conclude that Nicodemus benefitted from an informal relationship with Jesus through observation and listening. He knew that the Jewish ruling council, to which he belonged as one of the leaders was lacking something. One can perceive honesty in the question he asked Jesus in verse 4, “How can a man be born when he is old?”

He was trying to get something from the knowledge and experiences of Jesus so that he could unleash the potential that God had put in him. He also knew that there was a destiny that he could achieve by associating with a man like Jesus. He therefore made a decision to humble himself and go to a man who was rejected by the Jewish rulers. He was willing to lower himself in order to benefit from the treasures he had seen in the life of Jesus. Politically and religiously, Nicodemus was Jesus’ ruler; but spiritually he was mentored by Jesus.

The Jewish ruling council regarded Jesus as a rebellious prophet, who was bent on depriving them of their legitimate authority among the Jews. They did not believe that Jesus was from God. John 12:37 says, “Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him.”

The Bible gives a hint to some of the reasons the Jewish rulers hated Jesus when it reads, “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. What are we accomplishing?” they asked, “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation (John 11:47, 48).”

Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God (John 12:37-43). Nicodemus belonged to this category of believers.

He believed that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God but he would not go openly to him. He had to sneak out to him at night. Even though he was a leader, he feared his fellow leaders because they would not spare him if they saw him associating with Jesus. However, having known the truth from Jesus, he would

not pretend that all was well. He wanted to be set free from self-righteousness and pride.

Nicodemus had a position and religious/political power but he knew that Jesus had spiritual authority and the truth. Jesus had the ability to set him free according to his declaration in John 8 verses 31 and 32, "...If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Jack Zavada gave insights into the story of Jesus' influence on the life of Nicodemus. He writes that every seeker has a deep feeling that there must be something more to life; a great truth to be discovered. That was the case with Nicodemus, who went to Jesus at night because he suspected that this young man might be the promised Messiah.

Nicodemus learned that he had to be born again, and he did. Together with his friend Joseph of Arimathea, he later cared for and buried the body of the crucified Messiah in Joseph's tomb. Zavada commends Nicodemus as a model of faith that Christians must emulate.

Zavada further explains that Nicodemus stood up for Jesus when his fellow Pharisees were conspiring against him. Zavada quotes John 7:50-51, "Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and was one of their own numbers, asked, 'Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?'"

Nicodemus further demonstrated his faith in Jesus and a change of allegiance by helping Joseph of Arimathea take down the body of Jesus from the cross and lay it in a tomb, risking his life and reputation. He also donated 75 pounds of expensive myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' body when he had died.

He had a wise, enquiring mind that was dissatisfied with the Jewish legalism. He was courageous such that he sought out Jesus to get the truth directly from his mouth. Nicodemus defied the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees by treating Jesus' body with dignity and made sure that he received a befitting and honorable burial.

In his conclusion, (Zavada, 2014) says about Nicodemus, "Nicodemus would not rest until he found the truth. He badly wanted to understand, and he sensed that Jesus had the answer. After he became a follower, his life was changed forever. He never hid his faith in Jesus again."

The effect of Jesus' mentoring relationship with Nicodemus was far reaching because is obviously also had an impact of Joseph of Arimathea. For Nicodemus to take the bold steps he took in the hostile environment he was in, meant that he had really been empowered by Jesus' life and ministry. This is how far mentoring relationships can go.

Acts 21:8-9 also gives us a strong basis for believing that neither age nor gender can limit a person's ability to lead or mentor others. It says, "Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven. He had four unmarried (virgin) daughters who prophesied. This shows us that the four virgins, though young and female, were prophetesses. As such, they were raised by God to be some of the leaders in the church with the ability to mentor others in line with Ephesians 4:11-14.

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The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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