

PREPARING  
FOR  
MINISTRY



# PREPARING FOR MINISTRY



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO  
THEOLOGICAL FIELD  
EDUCATION

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EDITOR

 Kregel  
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*Preparing for Ministry: A Practical Guide to Theological Field Education*

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*To our mentors, the pioneers of field education  
who blazed the trail that we inherited*



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# Preface

As I write this, I am flying from Tampa back to my home in Dallas. I am not returning from a week at the beach enjoying the gorgeous sun and sand, however. Instead, I am returning from spending two days with our seminary students who are serving at churches in the Tampa area. While I missed out on the ocean views on this trip (maybe next time), I am taking back something even better. I am taking back once again a reminder of why I love my job so much. I am a field educator at a seminary, and I am returning from the field and from talking face-to-face with students who are serving Christ in their various ministry settings.

Looking back on my own seminary education, I know firsthand how life-changing a great internship can be. My own field education experience literally altered the course of my life. Now as the “internship guy” on a seminary campus, I get to watch that same level of discovery, uncertainty, stretching, wonder, and praise seep through my students’ lives as they involve themselves in the wonderful messiness of ministry. I (as well as everyone who contributed to this book) am passionate about student development. A field education internship is not busywork or cheap labor but is instead a fundamental element in the intentional development of a future ministry leader. A great internship experience can place a student in an environment where God can work through him or her in the lives of other people and (more importantly in many ways) where God can work in the student’s own life to develop calling, character, and competencies.

## **The Birth of a Book**

The birth of this book took place during an evening conversation in a Dallas hotel lobby as twenty-two members of the Evangelical Association of Theological Field Educators (EATFE) gathered for our annual meeting.<sup>1</sup> Many of us discussed how there were very limited resources currently available that addressed ministerial internships from an evangelical perspective or that dealt with some of the new realities of theological education. We talked about how we wished there was a resource that we could give to churches

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1. Originally started in 1983 as a caucus organization in the larger ecumenical Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE), EATFE is a professional field education organization representing a wide variety of denominational and nondenominational Bible colleges, seminaries, training centers, and nonprofit organizations. Information about both ATFE and EATFE can be found at [www.atfe.org](http://www.atfe.org).

and organizations that were looking for information on how to either start or improve their own internship program. We also reminisced on our own entry into the world of field education and how all of us had to learn our jobs by trial and error. Most of us were ministers who had entered the academic world by a variety of paths. How we all wished that there had been a new field educator's how-to manual to guide our ignorance.

Out of that initial discussion, we collectively decided to cooperate on a ministry preparation book. The purpose of this book is to provide a resource for ministry students, church leaders, nonprofit organization leaders, and Bible college and seminary professors that addresses many of the questions they pose when either participating in or organizing a formal internship program. We felt that a collaborative book would best represent current thought in evangelical theological schools and could address a wide audience.

The men and women who are contributors to this book are some of my dearest friends in ministry. I came out of the pastorate into the academic world as a field educator at a major seminary, and many of these individuals were my literal lifeline that first year as I tried to figure out my job in the strange world of academia. While many of us see each other only once a year, we have that type of instant connection that dear friends have.

### **A Word About Vocabulary**

One of the challenges in editing this book is the lack of a common vocabulary among Bible colleges and seminaries when it comes to what we do as a ministry and a profession. The technical term for what we do as professional educators is *field education*, since it is literally education that takes place in the field of vocational service instead of in the classroom. However, there is a wide variety of terms our schools use to describe our programs: *internship*, *practicum*, *residency*, *apprenticeship*, *practical training*, *pastoral training*, *mentored ministry*, and so on. While we have chosen the term *field education* in both the title of the book and in most of the chapters, please feel free to substitute the word on your campus that identifies the ministerial training that takes place on the field instead of in the classroom.

Different schools also use various terms for the person who works with the student intern during an internship. Some schools use the word *mentor*. Other schools use the word *supervisor* or *coach*. We have chosen the word *mentor* because we think it communicates a warmer feel than *supervisor* or *coach*. What takes place in an internship is more than an employee-employer relationship. Real mentoring (which will be discussed in greater detail in the book) is the goal regardless of the term used. Again, you may substitute your school's term for this person throughout the book.

Throughout the book we will be speaking about the relationship between the mentor and the student. Nevertheless, in our almost exclusive use of the term *mentor* for clarity's sake, we do not want to exclude others who may be involved in the internship process. Depending on the setting and

the requirements, the student intern may have a lay committee or advisory council involved in the process as well. For example, I ask students on our campus to have four “ministry consultants” in addition to their mentor. The number of people and the role of these people vary greatly depending on the school and denomination. In those settings where such a group is required, a group of laypeople (usually but not always) work alongside the on-site mentor in providing feedback, guidance, assessment, and prayer support throughout the internship. If you are reading this book as a member of such a supervisory group, please know that many of the items that are specifically addressed to the mentor can easily be applied to you as well. Although you may not have as much time with the student as the mentor, you are still a valuable member of the team.

### **The Umbrella of Spiritual Transformation**

Formal theological education is about much more than reading books, listening to lectures, and taking tests. While there is always a very vital cognitive part to any educational process, theological education is far more than just intellectual growth or competency development. At the heart of theological education is the heart of the student. The heart of leadership is the leader’s heart.

A student can have an engaging personality, but personality will only get that student so far in ministry without the development of the heart. A student can be a driven person with a very clear vision of the future, but that student can easily drive off the road without the foundation of the spiritual life. A student can be passionate about what he or she is doing, but those passions also can blind the student who lacks the light of spiritual insight. A student can be the smartest person in the class, but good grades will never make up for a lack of spiritual formation.<sup>2</sup>

I hate writing these words, but nothing surprises me anymore when I hear about fallen leaders. Talented pastors misuse their power. Eloquent speakers drown in pornography. Creative artists have affairs. Energetic ministers neglect their own families. Loving counselors step over respectable boundaries. Wise administrators mismanage money. Showcase couples get divorced. High school student leaders in the youth group get pregnant. Energetic clergy members run themselves to emotional burnout and physical neglect. The classic seven deadly sins of pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed, and sloth are, unfortunately, very active in the church today.

Being (spiritual transformation and character) always must precede doing (tasks and skills). Everything in leadership must be grounded in the idea of spiritual transformation and character. In both 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9, the focus is primarily on character qualifications for spiritual

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2. Stephen Graves and Thomas Addington, *A Case for Character: Authentic Living in Your Workplace* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), xiii; Henry Cloud, *Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality* (New York: Collins, 2006), 8.

## Preface

leaders. Leadership development is about the whole person, not just the *how-to* of leadership. In reality the *how-to* part is much easier than spiritual and character development. A good internship and mentoring relationship can create healthy leaders of spiritual substance and character. The internship should direct the student to examine his or her spiritual life in order to discover the integrity blind spots and encourage the student to begin dealing with the issue before it becomes a serious problem later.

While it may not be specifically said in a chapter, everything you will read in this book is under the overall umbrella of spiritual transformation. The contributors of this book are not interested in developing hollow men and women who look good on the outside but lack Christlikeness on the inside. We are not interested in training leaders and administrators who lack integrity. We are interested in developing godly servant leaders, men and women who will change the world by being useful vessels of the Holy Spirit in their churches and organizations. This growth in spiritual development and personal integrity can be the most important aspect of an internship and a mentoring relationship.

To remind the reader of this foundation, we have asked each contributor to begin his or her chapter with a relevant Scripture verse and to end his or her chapter with a prayer of transformation. So as you read even the “mundane” aspects of field education administration, please understand that every aspect is there to contribute to the spiritual transformation of the student’s life. Our prayer is that an environment will be created in the internship in which the Holy Spirit can transform the student (and maybe even the mentor) from the inside out.

—GEORGE M. HILLMAN JR.

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## Chapter 2



# Field Education and Ministry Skill Competence

TIMOTHY WITMER

*And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;  
with skillful hands he led them. (Ps. 78:72 NIV)*

**B**ill recently graduated from a fine seminary with an outstanding grade point average and bright prospects for his future. However, on arriving at his first parish, one of the most respected members of the church passed away. Bill's first responsibility: to officiate at Mrs. Mitchell's funeral. The problem? Bill did not have a clue as to exactly what he should *do*. The result was an unmitigated disaster. Bill began to question his call to the ministry, and the congregation began to question their call to Bill!

### *Integrity and Skills*

In the process of ministerial formation, the development of “competency” is generally considered to be directly related to what students will eventually *do* in ministry. Therefore, it is concerned with the development of ministry *skills*. The verse noted above identifies Shepherd-King David as someone who “shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.” At the outset of this chapter, it must be reinforced that for the individual preparing for ministry, “competence” in skill can never be divorced from “integrity of heart.” The individual who serves God effectively

is one whose service flows from love for Christ and love for the sheep for whom Christ died. After all, David, the shepherd-king, was a man “after God’s own heart.” When the disgraced apostle Peter was reinstated to his place of service, his threefold affirmation of love for the Master was the foundation for the threefold commission to feed the Lord’s “sheep” (John 21:15–17).

The biblical view of ministerial formation must be holistic. An early American example of this commitment to comprehensive ministerial formation was the Log College in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania, founded by William Tennant, who was succeeded by his son, Gilbert. On one of George Whitefield’s many visits to Philadelphia, he visited the Log College and heard Gilbert preach. Of this experience, Whitefield said, “He convinced me more and more that we can preach the gospel of Christ no further than we have experienced the power of it in our own hearts.”<sup>1</sup> All effective competence in ministry must be empowered by the risen Christ through his indwelling Spirit.

In a largely academic approach to theological education, this needs to be reinforced at every turn. As Leith Anderson has written in *A Church for the Twenty-first Century*, “Traditional seminary education is designed to train research theologians who are to become parish practitioners. Probably they are adequately equipped for neither.”<sup>2</sup> Robert Banks has warned that the current model of theological education emphasizes “*knowing*, at the expense of *doing and being*” and that “the professional school model now dominates, and this continues to ignore the *being* of the student, to exalt professionalism over calling and vocation.”<sup>3</sup> It is crucial, therefore, that the development of competence in ministry be built on the foundation of growth in Christlike character through a vital walk with the Good Shepherd. When this element is missing, mere “hired hands” are the result (see John 10:12–13).

Having said this, the development of “skillful hands” is an important element of ministerial preparation if one is to lead God’s people effectively. This chapter will provide a “how-to” approach to the development of ministry competencies. For the purposes of this chapter, the terms *ministry competence* or *competency* and *ministry skill* will be used interchangeably. The aspect of competency development is extremely important since church search committees or mission agencies who call individuals to positions of leadership should have confidence that candidates not only “know their stuff” but also know “what to do.”

God’s people are truly blessed when their leaders are not only mature in Christ but also competent in fulfilling their calling. It was also said of David

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1. Archibald Alexander, *The Log College* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 30.

2. Leith Anderson, *A Church for the Twenty-first Century* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1992), 46.

3. Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 135.



that “everything that the king did pleased all the people” (2 Sam. 3:36). This reveals the wisdom in practice that God gave to David for carrying out his responsibilities as the shepherd-king of Israel. Ideally, the development of ministry skill is nothing less than the growth of wisdom in practice for students and must be an important part of any institution’s program that hopes to be effective in preparing individuals for ministry.

### **Field Education and Competency**

There is a sense in which the development of competence in ministry is what field education is all about. It is only in the field of the local church or other ministry site that a student can get the opportunity to develop skills for ministry with the guidance of an experienced mentor. This is certainly the model that is clearly evident in the Scriptures. Models of biblical, mentor-based leadership training include such familiar teams as Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Paul and Timothy. Of course, the most vivid example is that of our Lord and his disciples, who are identified as those who were “with him” (Mark 3:14). Their training was in the villages, the desert, the hills, and with diverse peoples, from a woman condemned for adultery to the highest civil and religious officials in the land. This was truly field education at its best. It is undoubtedly for this reason that institutions accredited for the Master of Divinity degree by the Association of Theological Schools are required to include a practical field education experience in their programs.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of training in ministry competence in the field is not unlike the approach found in other professional disciplines. Schoolteachers are required to spend time student teaching, and prospective physicians work countless hours in internships and residencies, sharpening their skills as they shadow veteran practitioners. This is where the knowledge gained in the classroom moves into hands-on training so that the student will be ready to move into his or her respective practice. For the ministerial student, this experience in practical training in competency is crucial in helping confirm gifts and calling to a lifetime of ministry.

For this reason, it is important to urge students to get involved in such experiences early in their degree program. In the educational field, we have all heard horror stories about prospective schoolteachers who complete their academic requirements only to discover when doing their student teaching in *the last* year of their program that they absolutely hate the classroom! Because engagement in mentor-based training in ministry competence is an important ingredient in confirming a student’s gifts and calling, it should be planned to begin sooner rather than later in the degree program.

### **Prerequisites for Effective Competency Development**

Before getting to the actual process of mentoring ministry competence,

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4. The Association of Theological Schools, “Degree Program Standards,” <http://www.ats.edu/accrediting/standards/DegreeStandards.pdf>.

there are three preliminary questions that must be addressed: What ministry competencies should be developed? Who should do the mentoring? Where is the best setting for competency development? Without the foundation provided by the answers to these questions, effective development of competence in ministry will be compromised. The how-to question will be outlined in greater detail in the next section, where a suggested process for developing competence in ministry is presented.

### *What Ministry Competencies Should Be Developed?*

In order to be effective in developing competence in ministry, it is crucial to understand exactly *what* skills we are hoping the student will be able to *do*. There are different factors involved in answering this question. It is important for the institution's field education director to develop a list of competencies to provide guidance to the student and the mentor on the field. In developing such a list, everyone should take into account the basic *biblical* ministry competencies.

Another consideration in answering the "what" of training in ministry competence is to include requirements of the institution's ecclesiastical constituencies. Wherever possible, there should be an effort to coordinate the institution's field education competency requirements with those of the church. However, there must be flexibility in the development of such a list as it is impossible for the list to reflect the competencies needed for *every* aspect of ministry preparation. It is wise to make this a *recommended* and not a *required* list of competencies, which gives flexibility in tailoring the experience to the student as well as to the particular needs of the ministry site. For instance, while the core competencies for a church planter would be similar to those preparing for an established church ministry, there will be some important variations that could be included for a student hoping to move toward planting a church. Again, as in the medical field, some attention must be given to specialization in ministry skills. This reinforces the flexibility that is desirable in developing a list of recommended learning activities for the student.

Since it is unlikely the student will be able to complete all of the recommended learning activities concurrently, it is important for the mentor to work closely with the student to identify which of the activities will be the focus of the current experience. As noted above, flexibility to include elements that might be requested by the student due to his or her perceived professional ministry objective should be allowed. Research has shown that adult learners want to take part in setting their program of development.<sup>5</sup> This fosters ownership in the process and motivation for the tasks at hand. In any case, collaboration between student and mentor is important to set

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5. For a thorough discussion of the distinctive elements of andragogy (adult education), see Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (River Grove, IL: Follett, 1980).

the ministry skills to be engaged together with the time frame within which it is to be accomplished.

The development of such a list is an important guide for the mentor on-site as well because there can be a tension between the concrete ministry needs of what the *church* needs and what the *student* needs in order to gain a broad exposure to ministry competencies. Except for such a guide, students might spend all of their field education in youth or children's ministry and never have exposure to other competencies needed for effective pastoral ministry among adults, such as preaching and visitation. Therefore, it is important to provide mentors with a guide that provides the outline of competencies necessary for effective ministry. Figure 2.1 provides a sample listing of recommended learning activities. The list follows a "shepherding" motif as it focuses on providing competencies desirable for pastors.

### **Figure 2.1. Recommended Learning Activities**

#### ***Walking with the Chief Shepherd***

- Review spiritual formation issues
- Review biblical character qualifications (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1)
- Review family life issues

#### ***Feeding God's Flock***

- Questions about preaching with mentor
- Log 10 to 20 preaching opportunities outside of seminary classroom, including at least 5 with mentor evaluation
- Log 10 to 20 teaching opportunities, which can include Sunday school, youth group, etc.

#### ***Leading God's Flock***

##### *Administration*

- Attend 3 session (or board) meetings
- Attend 2 deacons' meetings
- Attend 2 church committee meetings
- Attend 1 congregational meeting
- Attend 2 presbytery meetings
- Read the Westminster Standards, Book of Church Order Rules of Government section or comparable ecclesiastical standards and discuss with mentor

##### *Worship*

- Lead worship at least 5 times
- Observe 1 funeral service
- Observe 1 wedding service

## Part 1: Purposes of Field Education

- Observe 1 baptismal service
- Observe 1 Communion service

### *Ministry*

- Discuss the church's philosophy of ministry with mentor
- Lead a specific ministry of the church
- Evangelism
- Discuss the church's outreach strategy with mentor
- Participate in some aspect of the church's outreach
- Make 3 evangelistic calls with mentor or experienced trainer

### ***Protecting God's Flock***

#### *Shepherding*

- Discuss the church's shepherding plan with mentor
- Participate in the church's shepherding plan under the guidance of mentor

#### *Visiting*

- Visit 3 church members with mentor
- Visit 3 hospital patients with mentor
- Visit 2 nursing home residents

#### *Counseling*

- Sit in on one complete counseling case

#### *Disciplining*

- Read denominational Book of Discipline and discuss with mentor and discuss an actual case (at the prerogative and discretion of mentor)

Notice that the list begins with spiritual formation, character qualifications, and family life issues. These are foundational matters and should be reviewed regularly together with the mentor. Other competencies reflect the biblical picture of ministry practice. There are other matters that could be included and certainly should be discussed, such as managing a schedule in ministry among others. The list is not intended to be exhaustive but merely to provide a basic form that can then be molded to meet the needs of the student, ministry setting, and ecclesial constituency.

### ***Who Should Guide the Development of Competence in Ministry?***

The answer to this question is the key to the whole endeavor of field education and is covered thoroughly in another chapter. However, it is important to highlight at least three characteristics of the individual who is effective in mentoring ministry competence.

#### *Mentors Effective in Ministry Competence*

First, the *mentor* must be competent in ministry. The old saying “practice

makes perfect” sounds good, but it is better expressed in the words “perfect practice makes perfect.” The obvious point is that it is possible to learn something improperly, and key factors in students’ practice are the models and mentors to whom they look. The example of the newly ordained pastor being assigned a funeral in his first months is my story, except that the departed member had not only requested that I officiate but also that another retired minister “assist” me.

In the seminary classroom I was well taught in the victory of Christ over death and the hope of the resurrection, but there were several practical matters to which I had not been introduced. Such things as how to plan a funeral service, how to write a funeral message, how and when to minister to the bereaved family, how to interact with the funeral director, and even where to stand at the graveside service were all matters left to me to figure out. This seasoned pastor who assisted me had conducted hundreds of funerals, while this was my first. Being able to work with this godly and experienced pastor enabled me to do my part well. I learned much, not only from my frantic phone calls, but also by observing a truly competent minister and shepherd interact with the bereaved and lead his part of the service (mostly from memory, by the way!). Once again, it was not merely his competence in ministry that impacted me but his maturity and godliness. What a wonderful privilege to be able to connect students with such experienced mentors *before* they engage in their first postseminary calling.

An early example of such a competent, godly model was Joseph Bellamy, who mentored more than a hundred men for ministry in the Congregational Church in New England before the days of the theological seminary (between 1742 and 1790). It was said that he

required them to write dissertations on the several subjects which had occupied their attention; and afterwards, sermons on those points of doctrine which he deemed most important; and finally, sermons on such experimental and practical topics as they might choose to select. *He was particularly earnest in inculcating the importance of a high tone of spiritual feeling, as an element of ministerial character and success.* His students are said to have formed the very highest idea of his talents and character, and, in some instances, to have regarded him with a veneration bordering well nigh upon idolatry.<sup>6</sup>

Bellamy was a man who was committed to the holistic approach to ministerial formation. Having said that mentors must be competent, it is important to add that they will never be perfect. Looking for perfection in a mentor is like looking for perfection anywhere else this side of heaven: it

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6. William Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York: Carter and Brothers, 1859), 1:405–6; emphasis added.

does not exist! Given that no mentor is perfect, one who is *transparent* is very helpful since students can learn as much from another's mistakes and shortcomings as from their strengths, if they are willing to share them. However, it is important in looking for individuals who mentor ministry competence that there be a track record of effectiveness in ministry that can be imparted to the student.

#### Mentors with Time to Mentor

Second, the mentor must have the *time* to mentor students. The days of Joseph Bellamy were the days before American Protestantism borrowed the "academy" approach to ministerial education from the European university model in the eighteenth century. Prospective ministers were nurtured by experienced pastors, sometimes living in the homes of their ministry mentors. While this level of commitment from a mentor might be unrealistic today, it is not unrealistic to expect a sincere investment of time and wisdom into the lives of the next generation of kingdom servants. However, not every minister has the passion, the patience, or the time for such an endeavor.

On the other hand, there are many who are willing to share their lives and ministries for this purpose. Paul reminded Timothy, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2 NASB). As Paul wrote these words, he was modeling the very principle he was urging upon Timothy. He shared his life and ministry with Timothy and others, preparing them for fruitful ministries of their own. The committed ministry mentor embraces the opportunity to invest in "faithful men" for the sake of the church at large.

The actual process of introducing individuals to the wide array of ministry skills takes time. It is best for everyone involved not to connect students with mentors who do not have the time needed for the complete process of competency development outlined below.

#### Mentors Who Love the Lord, Love Ministry, Love Students

Last, but not least, it must be clear that the mentor has a love for the Lord, for the ministry, and for ministerial students. Unfortunately, there are many who are cynical about the work of the ministry generally and about people in the church particularly. Because what students gain in these practical training times will impact them for life, it is best not to multiply such negative attitudes. On the other hand, love for the work of the ministry and for the people of God is often "caught" from as well as "taught" by mentors whose love for the Lord and his people is nothing less than contagious.

#### A Team Approach

In terms of the "who" of mentoring ministry competency, many have

found it to be helpful to establish a lay committee that will also provide assistance in the process. These individuals should share the commitment to partner in the preparation of future leaders of the church. While responsibilities of such a team will vary, at the very least they should come alongside the mentor to provide assistance and alongside the student to provide encouragement and constructive feedback. There is more on this in the evaluation segment below.

### ***Where Should Competency Development Occur?***

The benefit of field education is that it is on-the-job experience. Many of us have had the experience of being in a hospital when a physician surrounded by eager residents enters the room. The experienced physician is helping the residents to gain experience and understanding with you as the guinea pig! Hospitals that partner with medical schools in providing such hands-on experience are called “teaching hospitals.” These are institutions where resources are committed to such training and where the patients are informed that their physician will have “company” as he or she pokes and prods on his or her daily rounds.

When it comes to the matter of mentoring ministry competence, it is important that the local congregation hold such a commitment to equip future shepherds of God’s flock. They must be willing not only to share the pastor as a mentor to future pastors but also to share their own lives. These congregations will undoubtedly hear some “bad” sermons and experience some awkward moments as a student occasionally fumbles with what to do or say next, but they will be blessed as they see individuals nurtured for a lifetime of ministry. In mentoring ministry competence, nothing is more encouraging than a local congregation that not only understands their role in this process but also is committed to it.

Why not develop a network of “teaching churches” that relate to seminaries the way “teaching hospitals” relate to medical schools?<sup>7</sup> An earlier paragraph spoke of the rounds medical students make with their teachers in teaching hospitals. Such an institution shares a mutual commitment with a particular medical school to equip future doctors. This requires great cooperation in the teaching hospital from staff and patients alike to afford students such a unique and practical training setting. “Teaching churches” are recognized as those that have made a clear commitment to a partnership with the seminary in preparing a new generation of ministers.

These churches must be willing to commit the time of pastor or mentor to the process and be open to being ministered to by someone “in training.” Ideally, a teaching church would also be committed to enabling the student to complete internship requirements for ordination in their respective

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7. Westminster Theological Seminary, “Teaching Churches Network,” <http://www.wts.edu/mentor/tcnetwork.html>.

ecclesiastical constituency, thus providing a well-rounded training in ministry competence.

In considering the matter of the “where” of training in competence, the concept of specialization should also be kept in mind. It is helpful if the focus of the site reflects the aspirations of the student. For example, if someone senses the Lord calling him to plant a church, strive to place him with someone developing a church plant. Someone who senses a call to missions should be mentored by a veteran missionary. It is helpful in these circumstances for the field education director to develop a network of “strategic partnerships” with mission organizations and other ministries that are willing to come alongside students as they seek confirmation of gifts and calling in nonparish type ministry settings. While a complete match of every student’s perceived professional ministry goal with a corresponding practitioner in that area is very hard work, it is another area in which field educators can strive to tailor the experience for the benefit of the students.

### **A Process for the Development of Competence in Ministry Skills**

This section will focus on a practical, how-to process for the development of competence in ministry skills. After the mentors and sites have been identified and the competencies to be included have been agreed upon, how should one proceed with the process of developing ministry competencies in a student? The plan outlined in this chapter includes four basic steps of the mentoring process, seen from the perspective of the mentor:

- Instruction
- Demonstration
- Observation
- Evaluation

By way of overview, the first two (instruction and demonstration) are modeling elements; that is, these are elements in which the focus of the activity is on the mentor modeling the particular ministry skill to the student. The second two (observation and evaluation) are multiplying elements, since the competency modeled for the student is now being reproduced in his life as the mentor observes and evaluates. Progressive movement through the four steps requires the student’s increasing participation in the ministry task while the mentor’s involvement gradually decreases.

#### ***Modeling***

##### *Instruction*

Instruction is the aspect of mentoring competency in which information is communicated to the student that he needs to know in order to accomplish the task successfully. This should include both macroinstruction and microinstruction. The macroelements of instruction would include the biblical and theological principles that support and direct this particular



aspect of ministry. It is important for students to learn not only the “how-tos” of this competency but also the “why.” It should not be assumed that this has been covered in the seminary classroom. If it has, there is still the importance of understanding this competency in the context of the ministry setting. The mentor should help the student make the connections between the theory and theology of ministry and its actual practice. The microelements of instruction should include many of the specific how-tos of competence in ministry skills.

There are many examples we could employ as we walk through this process, but let us use the example of a hospital visit. What might the instruction segment include? Beginning with the macroelements, answer the question of why this particular competency is important. Talk about the importance of the hospital visit as part of the pastor’s shepherding ministry to the congregation. Remind the student that ministry is incarnational and that it is important that the minister demonstrate compassion for the parishioner by being “with” the person in time of need and that this is a very real expression of the Lord’s concern in a time of trial.

After having talked about why this is important, move on to instruct the student in the microinstruction of how to complete a hospital visit. Not only should the mentor provide the student with a list of Bible passages that are preferable to read depending on the particular situation of the patient, but the mentor should encourage the student to search out and develop his own list of Scriptures and resources to use. Instruct the student as to the purpose and elements of the prayer for the sick. Strive to inform the student of as many practical matters as possible. Where should the student park? When should the student go? How often should the student go? How should the student interact with hospital staff? What does the student do if there are other people visiting when he arrives? How should the student relate to another patient if it is a semiprivate room? What should the student do when the hospital room door is closed? How long should the visit be? The mentor needs to give instructions as to what should and should not be done on a hospital visit.

While it is impossible to anticipate every question, as much information as possible should be provided before actually moving to the second modeling step of taking the student on a hospital visit. The mentor needs to be sure to allow time for the student to ask for clarification or to articulate questions, as the student might have particular concerns that the mentor might not have addressed.

Figure 2.2 illustrates a sample reflection activity, an important resource to develop alongside the list of recommended learning activities.<sup>8</sup> Reflection activity pages provide the student with opportunity to record key principles from the instruction step as well as questions, reflections, and best learning from the evaluation step.

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8. A full listing of “Reflection Activities” correlating to the “Recommended Learning Activities” mentioned in this chapter can be found at [www.wts.edu](http://www.wts.edu).

## Figure 2.2 Sample Reflection Activity

### Protect the Flock (Pastoral Care): Hospital Visitation

#### ***Hospital Visit #1: Observe***

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Whom did you accompany on the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Condition of the patient: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did your *mentor* do during the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Discussion of the visit with your mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital Visit #2: Participate**

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Whom did you accompany on the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Condition of the patient: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did your mentor do during the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did you do during the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Discussion of the visit with your mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Hospital Visit #3: Participate**

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Whom did you accompany on the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Condition of the patient: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did *your mentor* do during the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What did *you* do during the visit? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Observations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Discussion of the visit with your mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Demonstration

The second modeling element in mentoring ministry competence is demonstration. All of the matters listed under “instruction” could be communicated in a classroom; but in the mentoring experience, the student actually accompanies the mentor in the ministry experience. Using our example, suppose the mentor takes the student on hospital visitation, where the practices discussed in the instruction step are actually demonstrated to the student. In this step, the model to be followed is presented. The mentor should be sure that the student understands that he is to observe on this visit. Be sure to let the hospital patient know the identity of the other visitor if he or she does not already know the student. In fact, it is preferable to call ahead and inform the patient in advance. While the mentor should be self-conscious to be a good example of what he is seeking to model to the student, the mentor must also “be true to self.”

Having concluded the visit, the mentor should be certain to allow time for interaction about the experience. Back at the office or in the car, work through the elements of the visit that were discussed beforehand and reflect on each one. The mentor should model an openness that allows the student the opportunity to ask pointed and difficult questions. Encourage the student to ask any and every question that comes to mind. There may be issues that were not covered in the instruction segment that come to mind as a result of the visit. Mentor and student will undoubtedly have experienced a variation on some of the “things to expect” discussed beforehand.

There also may be areas in which the mentor could have been more effective. This is where the transparency of the mentor is crucial. The student must be allowed the prerogative to ask “challenging” questions. The mentor should not be threatened by this but should model humility and openness in reflecting on the experience. If the mentor could have done better or would have done something differently in hindsight, this should be part of the discussion. After all, this is important to model, given that the mentor will eventually provide constructive criticism to the student and will expect openness from him. The openness and transparency of the mentor will be an encouragement to the student to exhibit the same traits. This time of mutual reflection is often neglected but is absolutely crucial to maximize the effectiveness of the modeling stage of mentoring ministry competency.

### ***Multiplying***

#### Observation

After the mentor has provided sufficient instruction and allowed ample opportunity for the student to demonstrate a particular ministry skill, the mentor now observes the student actually engaged in the particular ministry practice. The mentor must have wisdom to know when the student is actually ready to participate in the ministry skill at hand. How is it possible to know if the student is ready? One of the best ways to know is to simply ask the student. Student anxiety can largely be relieved if the mentor takes

the time to outline exactly what the student will be expected to do so that there are no surprises—though such surprises are often an education in themselves!

Using the example of the hospital visit, a good way to begin is to ease the student into the competency by asking him to participate in one element of the visit. This is a valuable way to proceed with ministry skills that have several parts or pieces. Perhaps the first time the student will read the Scriptures. On successive visits the mentor allows the student to take the lead gradually in the visit with the mentor moving more and more to the role of the observer. Eventually, the mentor allows the student to “carry the ball” for the entire visit, with the mentor being as much in the background as is practicable. The student should be allowed to assume as much responsibility in such tasks as is allowable by the congregation and ecclesial judicatory.

There will be those competencies in which a student will not be allowed to participate fully until ordination. On the list of recommended learning activities, students are allowed merely to observe several ministry practices. For example, officiating at weddings and Communion services are examples of competencies that the student will ordinarily not have opportunity to “practice.” It is all the more important that these nonparticipatory ministry skills be demonstrated to the student and discussed in detail. Competencies restricted to ordained clergy vary from church to church and the list of recommended learning activities should be adjusted accordingly.

### Evaluation

Evaluation is the second element in the multiplying phase and is perhaps the most important of the entire process. If there is an element of training in ministry competence that is left out, it is usually evaluation. This, however, is where the best learning takes place. This is where the mentor truly ministers to the student in helping him refine and improve ministry practice.<sup>9</sup>

Returning to the example of the hospital visit, it is best if the mentor refers to the specific matters discussed in the instruction phase as the visit is reviewed. Begin by asking for the student’s perception of how the visit went. Ask the student to articulate areas in which the student thought he did well, and then ask for some things the student thought he could have done better. If the instruction phase was well done, there will probably be a close correlation between the student’s perception of things and that of the mentor. When it comes time for the mentor to provide input, it is important to lead off with encouraging comments. It is a lot better to start with “That was a beautiful prayer” than to begin with something critical. In leading with encouragement, the foundation is being laid for the constructive criticism

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9. A more detailed discussion on evaluation is found in chapter 11, “Assessment and Evaluation in Field Education.”

that must inevitably follow. The mentor needs to be as specific as possible in letting the student know how the visit could have been improved (“Don’t sit on the hospital bed!”).

The mentor should pay attention not only to the student’s ability to complete the task successfully but also to the student’s attitude and emotional state in carrying out the particular ministry skill. Does the student have an attitude appropriate to the occasion? Is the student’s pastoral heart and concern evident? With regard to the example of the hospital visit, does the student have an appropriate bedside manner? Is he too grave? Is he too giddy? The mentor should not hesitate to engage the student on these important matters. This touches upon the area of emotional intelligence, which has been shown to be a crucial matter in effective competence in ministry. The ability of the student to develop healthy relationships with people and demonstrate emotional maturity is an important and often ignored aspect of ministerial formation.

It is at this point that the student’s “Reflection Activity” page should be accessed in order to make important notes on the experience just completed, including mentor feedback and areas for improvement. It is also in this step that the feedback of the support committee should be solicited if one has been formed to assist in the student’s growth and development.

While certain ministry tasks require greater emphasis on one element than the others, each of the steps should be included. Another consideration is that each mentor has a natural tendency to neglect at least one or overemphasize another. One mentor might love the initial instruction step while another provides little or no instruction to a student in the particular ministry task. The wise mentor will evaluate his tendency and compensate accordingly. Also, the elements are not mutually exclusive but interdependent. There is a sense in which the whole experience is instruction. The evaluation phase is actually a form of instruction, which essentially begins a new mentoring cycle.

### **Conclusion**

As we have seen, effective mentoring in ministry competence must be built on a holistic picture of ministerial formation beginning with issues of spiritual and character formation. Ministry competence must not be seen as an end in itself; it must be properly motivated by love for the Lord and for his flock. Gifted and willing mentors must be sought out, mentors who will invest their lives in future generations of those sensing a call to ministry. Churches and other ministry settings where students will be free to test their gifts and calling must be sought. These are places where they can gain sincere encouragement from their successes and strengths as well as constructive criticism in areas of weakness and inexperience. The four-step process for training in ministry competence should be kept in mind, making sure all four of the steps are included.

The advantage of such a process is that the student will come to an

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understanding, not only of his giftedness and strengths, but also of his weaknesses. No one is gifted for everything! This will help the student grow in wisdom in future ministry as the student identifies areas he needs to strengthen as well as areas where he will need to deploy the gifts of others to provide a well-balanced ministry to the flock he serves. Hopefully, the process will also give the student a template for developing others in ministry, as well as for ongoing evaluation of his own skills throughout a lifetime of ministry.

All of these things taken together will, by God's grace, advance the preparation of the student to be an effective servant in Christ's kingdom, a shepherd who out of integrity of heart serves the flock with skillful hands for his glory.





## Prayer of Transformation

*Almighty God, we thank you that because you are our Shepherd, we have everything that we need for life and godliness. We ask that you would please fill our hearts with the Spirit you have given so that in all we do we might have integrity of heart, loving you with full devotion. We also ask that our service would be the overflow of our love for you and that, as such, we would seek to do the very best we can according to the gifts you have given to us—that we would develop skillful hands to serve you. Help us to remember that when we are effective and fruitful that this is a gift from your hand. Help us also to remember that when we are weak and stumble and fall, it is that same hand that picks us up and encourages us to go on. Thank you for the forgiveness of our sins through the gift of your Son, our Good Shepherd, and for the joy of serving your flock. Amen.*

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you sought to find a place to improve your competence in ministry skills? What are your perceived strengths? Your perceived weaknesses?
2. Do you give adequate attention to spiritual, character, and family formation?
3. Does the field education experience in which you are engaged give you opportunity for training in the full spectrum of ministry skills, including those in which you perceive yourself to be weak and inexperienced?
4. Have you sought to coordinate the competencies of your program to the ordination requirements (if applicable) of your ecclesial judicatory?
5. Have you sought to find a mentor who will spend adequate time with you in your growth in competence in ministry?
6. Do you have a humble and teachable heart that is characterized by a willingness to receive not only encouragement but also constructive criticism?

## Further Reading

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