

“Few tasks are as important in the church as training future leaders. In this new book, Phil Newton teaches pastors how to disciple leaders and how to shepherd a congregation that values investing in future leadership. As Newton reminds us in this book, bringing up future leaders isn’t just the job of the pastor, but of the whole congregation. This is an urgently needed book in churches today.”

—R. Albert Mohler Jr., President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“The question for Christians today is not if they are called to leverage their lives for the Great Commission; it’s only a matter of where and how. And who better to train our people to seize those opportunities than the local church? As we often say at the Summit, “Discipleship happens in relationships.” This book gets at the heart of discipleship—intentional, strategic, biblical relationships that equip people and send them out into God’s mission.”

—J. D. Greear, pastor, author, and theologian

“Pastors everywhere struggle to train leaders. We know we need to do it, but we don’t know where to begin. *The Mentoring Church* combines biblical truth and historical insight with contemporary examples of churches that are raising up leaders for the future. Pastor, read this book! You’ll be glad you did. Better yet, study it with your leadership team. No other book covers this topic so completely. I’m glad Phil Newton shared his wisdom with the rest of us. May God use this book to raise up a new generation of leaders for the cause of Christ.”

—Dr. Ray Pritchard, President, Keep Believing Ministries

“Phil Newton’s *The Mentoring Church* is essential reading for Christians interested in mentoring or being mentored. Newton shows the absolute centrality of the local church for spiritual mentorship, constructs a practical mentorship template for churches, and provides contemporary examples that will help pastors envision spiritual mentorship in their own unique contexts. Highly recommended.”

—Bruce Riley Ashford, Provost and Dean of the Faculty,
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This call for pastors to give themselves to mentoring the next generation of church leaders is rooted in Scripture and illustrated from church history as well as different contemporary church models. This book encourages us to keep focused on this vital work for the health of local churches and ongoing spread of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

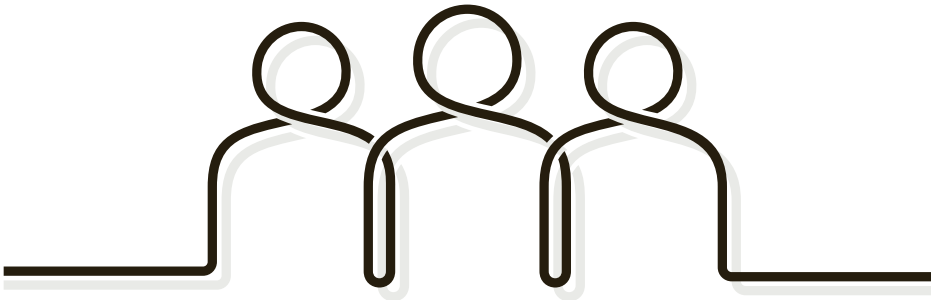
—Paul Rees, Lead Pastor, Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh

“Phil Newton loves the church of Jesus Christ and is passionate about its spiritual health and growth. It is this passion that drives this book about the making, mentoring, and maturing of godly and effective leaders in Christ’s church for his glory.”

—Liam Goligher, Senior Minister, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia

PHIL A. NEWTON

THE MENTORING CHURCH



HOW PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS
CULTIVATE LEADERS

 Kregel
Ministry

The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders

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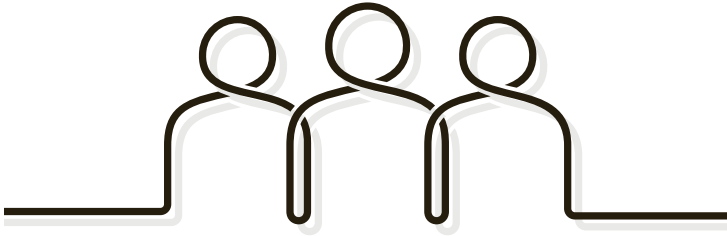
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This book is dedicated to the
church planters, missionaries, pastors, elders,
and church leaders mentored over the past thirty years at the
South Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee

and

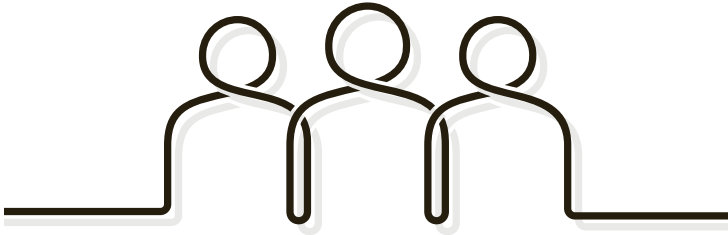
to the congregation that has so faithfully loved, served, chal-
lenged, shaped, prayed for, and encouraged them.

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FOREWORD



Phil Newton has blessed congregations and congregational leaders with a thoughtful and carefully designed proposal to help develop a new generation of pastors and leaders for the churches. Drawing on Scripture, healthy models from church history, and his own pastoral ministry experience, Newton has provided a gift for congregations and their leaders.

This vision for mentoring a new generation of church leaders will require well-prepared and gifted ministers, as well as willing congregations and other ministry partners, in order for implementation of this work to take place. The proposal found in this extremely helpful volume is informed by the deep realities of the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37–39) and grounded in the commission of Jesus Christ himself who commissioned the church to make disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:19–20). In Ephesians 4:11–16, the apostle Paul identifies the goals for an effort such as this one, which involves building up the church, guiding it to maturity in faith, and leading it to unity. Those first-century goals continue to be the focus for mentoring and developing leaders for our day as well. This work calls for mature leaders to invest themselves in younger God-called ministers, in a manner that follows Paul’s pattern with Timothy and Titus. What Timothy and Titus had heard from Paul, they were to pass along to faithful leaders who could teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). Newton’s proposal envisions the replication of these practices in a similar way.

The picture with which we are presented in the book that you hold in your hands does not eschew the important work of Christian colleges, theological seminaries, or other specialized parachurch ministries. Instead, this proposal calls for cooperation and collaboration with these entities—a both/and perspective rather than either/or. Recognizing that academic institutions need congregations and that congregations can benefit from other institutions or agencies, Newton has

put forward an encouraging model for partnership that should be both welcomed and encouraged by all who are called to prepare the next generation of ministers.

Church leaders have been entrusted with the Christian faith, the body of truth “once for all delivered to the saints” (Titus 1:9; Jude 3). The Christian faith is not just faith in faith—some subjective, amorphous feeling—but is, in an objective sense, a body of beliefs, which in the Pastoral Epistles is called the teaching, the deposit, the faith, and the truth. This pattern of Christian truth is now available to mentors and mentees, to churches and church leaders, in the New Testament. One of the first responsibilities in the development of young, God-called and Spirit-enabled ministers includes instruction in the basics of these Christian beliefs about the Trinitarian God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), Scripture, humanity, sin, salvation, the Christian life, the church, the kingdom of God, eternal life, as well as Christian ethics.

Mentors and congregations also have the responsibility to prepare young ministers for the issues and expectations that they will encounter in their churches. The vision for mentoring must be holistic, preparing head, heart, and hands. Congregations need ministers who are well informed, but who also are Christianly formed and prepared for the various responsibilities of ministry.

Mentoring helps mentees learn to see the world from a biblical perspective, to respond scripturally to the issues of life, and to shape Christian motivations and strategies for ministry. The importance of connecting mentoring with the life of congregations is vital for this effort. Newton has provided well-researched models for his readers, showing how Zwingli, Calvin, Spener, Gano, Spurgeon, Bonhoeffer, and others invested in this important work during their time and in their contexts. Thus, we are invited to learn not only from Scripture itself, but, also, from the wisdom of those who have gone before us.

Newton’s vision for a partnership between ministry leaders, congregations, and theological institutions recognizes that theological education has its roots in the churches. In the apostolic and post-apostolic period, pastors and church leaders were called to ongoing study (2 Tim. 2:15) in order to provide oversight for the ministry of the Word of God in the midst of worship services, as well as to train and disciple new converts (2 Thess. 2:15; Titus 1:9). Such an approach recognizes that theology is best done in, with, and for the church.

Scripturally centered mentoring recognizes the Bible as an inspired and authoritative source for understanding life, worship, and ministry; as a wellspring for preaching, teaching, and liturgy; as a primary source for the formulation of theology; as a model for pastoral care; and as a foundation for spiritual and worldview formation. Church leaders and congregations must create a community

context—including relational connections—where young ministers and mentees will be able to learn best practices regarding the interpretation of the Bible, the study of Christian theology, and the application of these truths for the practical administration of church and church leadership, as well as for preaching, worshiping, and ministry. Mentoring practices may also include the strengthening of one's understanding of denominational distinctives, as well as specialized ministry callings, in addition to the essential work associated with funerals, weddings, pastoral counseling, the administration of the ordinances, global missions, racial reconciliation, and intercultural competencies.

Ultimately, Newton's vision for mentoring focuses on the building up of the people of God and the advancement of the gospel mission. In embodying that mission, the church is called to be faithful to discern, interpret, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as the transforming power for the world. Such mentoring practices help to eliminate the scholar vs. practitioner/academy vs. church dichotomy that exists in some portions of the Christian community.

Young ministers who have been prepared for church ministry through faithful mentoring will be prepared to understand what the church has believed through the ages, to proclaim the good news of the gospel, to lead others in the worship of our majestic God, to recover a true understanding of church health, and to provide genuine significance and security for the living of these days. Mentoring pastors and congregations will help the next generation of church leaders to be prepared to serve with conviction, giftedness, and humility—serving together with other brothers and sisters in Christ to extend the shared work of the gospel around the world, advancing the kingdom of God. Such young ministers will learn to relate to one another in love and humility, bringing about true fellowship and community in orthodoxy as well as in orthopraxy before a watching world.

We join with Phil Newton in praying that God will raise up a new generation of faithful, well-prepared, convictional, and compassionate church leaders who are prepared for the ever-changing and ever-expanding challenges of the twenty-first century and who will accept the responsibility for investing in the lives and ministries of those called to serve the next generation. We join together to ask the Lord to expand and renew our vision for ministry and leadership, for discipleship and churchmanship. We trust that the next generation of church leaders will manifest a stronger and deeper dedication to the work of church and ministry, giving thanksgiving for and learning from the many who have gone before us.

The vision that has been proposed in this volume for effective and faithful mentoring is informed and shaped by the best practices of church history, enabling us to bring together an understanding and knowledge of the past that will

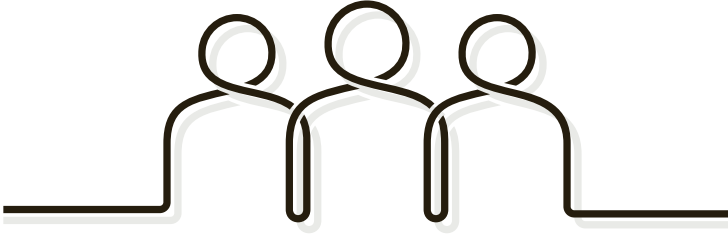
keep church leaders from confusing what is merely a contemporary expression or fad from those things that are enduringly relevant. Shaping these truths and ministry practices in the context of Christian history offers insight for today and guidance for the future.

We pray for pastors and church that will seek to implement this vision as they serve together to help prepare the next generation of ministers and leaders for ministry and leadership in the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of mentoring and developing young church leaders is indeed a distinctive and important calling. Let us pray for God's blessings and favor to rest upon those who accept the challenge of this calling—for the good of the churches, for the advancement of the gospel message, and for the glory of our great God.

David S. Dockery

President, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School/Trinity International University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Books grow in community. They evolve and take shape through the sharpening and honing of brothers and sisters living life together in Christ. My life continues to be enriched and affected by this kind of fellowship with the body. These relationships contribute, knowingly and unknowingly, to the process of putting words on a page. For that reason, I must call the reader's attention to just a few who made this book possible.

South Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, has given me the opportunity to serve them for thirty-years. In this time, they've supported and encouraged me to mentor for ministry. My fellow elders—Tom, Dan, Jim, Tommy, Chris, Drew, and Matt—have joined me in mentoring. Those in our congregation that we've mentored together, along with others already engaged in ministry, have contributed to our joy in mentoring. You brothers have given us far more than we've given to you.

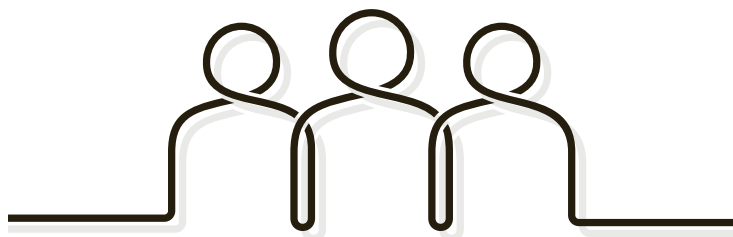
Special thanks goes to those who've offered suggestions for improving this work: John Hammett, Alvin Reid, Matt Sliger, Bruce Ashford, Chris Spano, Ray Pritchard, Jonathan Leeman, Matt McCullough, Jordan Thomas, and Raymond Johnson. I'm thankful for Debbie Jones' assistance with a load of details. David Dockery exemplifies the scholar-churchman faithful in training the next generation. I appreciate his encouraging Foreword to this book. Once again I'm grateful to work with the excellent team at Kregel Publications. Thanks to all of you!

Karen, the love of my life, has moved this project forward in countless ways by her support, encouragement, listening ear, prayers, and always good counsel.

May Jesus Christ who trained his disciples to preach the gospel receive all glory!

INTRODUCTION

SIXTEEN, CALLED, AND CLUELESS



Along with hundreds of other communities, the sweep of the Jesus Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s brought the message of the gospel to my small town in Alabama. Our church's pastor had no clue of what to do with teenagers and young adults professing faith in Christ, sharing testimonies, witnessing in the community, and meeting several nights a week for fellowship. So he ignored us. Along with that, he punted on involvement with several of us who sensed God's call to ministry. Out of that atmosphere, as a sixteen-year-old who knew nothing about ministry, I began to pursue gospel ministry.

While several hundred people attended our county seat First Baptist Church, most seemed contented to just act nicely, attend the dry worship services, tolerate gospelless sermons, and maintain the façade of Christianity. Yet the invasion of God's Spirit in regenerating power in the lives of my friends and me left us hungering for more.

We saw through the disunity on the church staff, the popularity contests to elect church deacons, and the superficial talk about missions. Spending three-fourths of our Sunday school hour discussing Friday night's football game, with a quick fifteen-minute read through the packaged lesson, did nothing to stimulate Bible study or satisfy our spiritual hunger. That was not the ideal setting to prepare for gospel ministry.

Despite spending three years in that church after announcing my call to ministry, the pastor never talked to me about spiritual disciplines, a daily quiet time, Scripture memory, Bible study, or good books to read. Twice he gave me the opportunity to preach, where I muddled through poor attempts at expounding my chosen texts, with hardly a clue on what to do, and with no guidance from

him. No feedback followed to help steer me toward better exegesis and clearer homiletics. Nothing. No encouragement, no correction, and no guidance—just silence, with the expectation that whenever I completed college and attended seminary, then I would get what I needed to prepare for gospel ministry. That seemed to be the ethos for most in the church as they looked from a distance at the “preacher boys.”

Thankfully, a few couples invested their time and spiritual nurturing in helping my friends and me. They opened their homes, taught us the Scripture, prayed with us, listened to our endless questions, and modeled satisfaction in Christ. That small band of church members, without realizing it, started the process of preparing me for gospel ministry. They mentored me for living as a Christian and serving in ministry.

Fortunately, my time in college helped, with my first sustained exposure to men seeking to expound the Scripture. My heart raced at hearing the Word opened and applied. I wanted to do the same, but how?

Eager to jump into ministry, I accepted a church’s offer to serve on their staff. This small church in the city where I attended college had little to offer the members or me. We endured repetitive sermons that lacked gospel clarity, followed by extended pleas and coaxing for decisions. Again, yet another pastor never engaged me to give direction, mentor, or teach the details of ministry. The church seemed to be gasping for its last breath. The best lesson that I learned was that I did not want to emulate that pastor or have a church so unhealthy.

My next staff position provided many more opportunities to learn but the pastor, while warm and caring toward me, had himself never been mentored in a healthy congregational setting. He typically followed denominational protocol without much thought to developing a strong, Christ-centered church. Although I did not understand at the time, he seemed to grasp little about shepherding the church toward spiritual health. His preaching scarcely followed the dynamics of biblical exposition. So when I preached on the short notice that he usually gave me, other than maybe telling me, “Good job,” he never took me aside to correct and hone my preaching. I needed lots of honing! But no one had mentored him in the details of pastoral shepherding, so he had no direction in mentoring me to shepherd the church. Thankfully, as I sought to disciple a group of young adults, we banded together to grow in spiritual disciplines and gospel witness. Without realizing it, the questions, interactions, and accountability from that small part of the church helped to mentor me for ministry. The time with them in active Christian community shaped my future pastoral work more than anything.

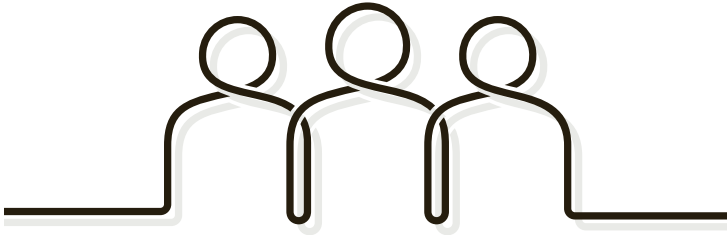
During my last year of master of divinity work, I began pastoring a small, rural church a couple hours north of my seminary. I committed to preach expositionally and consequently, received some excellent training in biblical preaching through one of my professors. But I still understood little about shepherding a congregation, the dynamics of a healthy church, or the functions of a Great Commission church. I knew how to craft biblical sermons but not how to shepherd God's flock. Patiently, that little church endured my many mistakes and gave me a chance to begin to learn a few lessons in pastoral ministry. More lessons would follow in other churches that I served. But so would mistakes. Time after time I reached for the telephone to call a brother in ministry for advice on what to do next or how to walk through a dicey membership problem. Apart from the patient counsel of those brothers, I'm sure that I would not have made much progress in ministry. And I might not have lasted long. They mentored me, whether they realized it or not.

You might have noticed a theme running through my personal narrative. Those preparing for ministry need mentoring. Such mentoring certainly calls for the wise guidance of a seasoned pastor or elder. But just as critical to the process, the kind of mentoring that prepares future pastors, missionaries, Christian workers, and church planters best takes place with the involvement of a healthy congregation. *The most effective mentoring teams together pastors and congregations to help shape those who will serve Christ's churches.*

That's what this book is about. I seek to consider the biblical and theological foundation for local churches and pastoral leaders training those that the Lord raises up from among them for gospel ministry. To do that, we will take a look at mentoring models in Luke, Acts, and the Pastoral Epistles. The details that we will consider lay groundwork for contemporary churches.

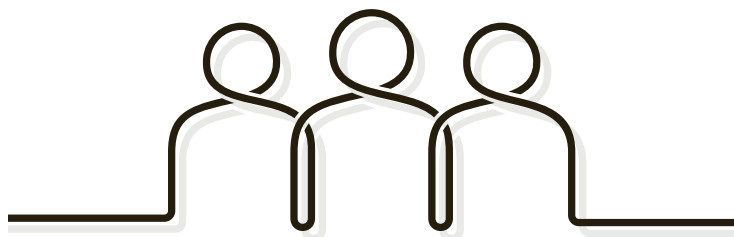
But it's also important for us to see how others built on the biblical models through the centuries. Since historical examples help us to navigate the process of training for ministry, we'll consider some from five centuries, with well-known and lesser-known pastors. Perhaps even more applicable, visualizing current examples of church-centered mentoring helps to better frame how we can do the same in our churches. So we will look at four local churches that range in size, vary in leadership, and approach mentoring from different angles. Then we will identify a workable church/pastoral leader template that will be useful in embarking on training up gospel workers, regardless of the church's size. So let's journey on!

ABBREVIATIONS



<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament
BECNT	<i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>
BGC	Billy Graham Center
BST	Bible Speaks Today
DBW	Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works
<i>EBC</i>	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>EMQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Missions Quarterly</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LNTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTC	New Testament Commentary
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

HEALTHY CHURCHES NEED HEALTHY LEADERS



While ministering in Brazil, a pastor invited me to preach in his evening worship service. It happened to be “pastor appreciation day,” so I witnessed what seemed to be genuine affection for the pastor. Lively music, songs by the children’s choir, and a presentation preceded my sermon. But I knew that I was in trouble when I stood to expound the Scriptures and noticed that my translator did not have a Bible with him. After borrowing a Portuguese Bible, I asked him to turn to Titus so that he could read the text before I began the sermon. Although a faithful church member, he couldn’t find Titus. I knew enough Portuguese to help out and ease his embarrassment. I noticed that many in the congregation sitting in the straight-backed pews had as much trouble as my translator finding Titus. Some searched for it in the Old Testament. Grieved, I realized that this pastor and church neglected biblical exposition and Bible learning. While they were lively, they were not healthy. Noise and movement do not equate to church health.

Yet that’s not a problem localized in Brazil or in other countries. I’ve witnessed similar experiences, without quite the liveliness, in the United States. Some pastors react to the unhealthy congregations by making a decision to plant a church. I know that personally, since I did the same after nine years of pastoring unhealthy churches.

No casual observer of the state of Christianity in North America would squabble over the need for new churches. Yet merely *multiplying* churches fails to answer the need for *effective* Great Commission churches (Matt. 28:18–20). Missionary leader David Platt points out that far too many churches simply assume knowledge of the gospel without admitting that many of their adherents have

never understood and believed the gospel.¹ Ed Stetzer, a leading church planter and strategist, echoes Platt's concern by warning that evidence of genuine discipleship seems unnecessary for many churches to call someone a Christ-follower.² We need more than just new churches.

While the need for church multiplication rises, so does the need for churches to maintain gospel-centered focus and faithfulness.³ Apart from such focus and faithfulness, a church remains unhealthy. So then, what is a healthy church? Washington DC pastor Mark Dever explains, "A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God's character as his character has been revealed in his Word."⁴ Healthy churches should be normal, yet far too often churches confuse busy activity—like that church in Brazil—with the spiritual health that grows in corporate Christian character. Unfortunately, sometime pastoral leaders seem paralyzed at shepherding ailing congregations toward robust health.

While assessing North America as a mission field, theologian Jeff Iorg admits that many churches "have lost their mission, identity, focus, and in some cases, their credibility." He wisely reflects, "But do not dismiss the Church too quickly. God will sustain the Church and churches, both universally and locally (Rev. 5:9–10)."⁵ Great Commission churches must be different from those that have slipped into unhealthy patterns and practices. They will need to return, Iorg asserts, to proclaim the biblical gospel, raise membership standards, practice church discipline, maintain doctrinal fidelity, embrace a missional mindset, and model Christian community. Additionally, they will need to show creativity in adapting to the cultural context of their communities.⁶ Pastoral service in churches that take seriously the call of Jesus in the Great Commission requires a deliberate approach to training and equipping the leaders who serve them.

In considering the global front, David Platt explains his desire as leader of Southern Baptist's International Mission Board: "We're working and pleading with

1 Lillian Kwon, "Is the Church Dying in America's Bible Belt?" *Christianity Today*, April 28, 2010, n.p. [cited 24 January 2012], accessed January 24, 2012, <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/is.the.church.dying.in.americas.bible.belt/25802.htm>.

2 Ibid.

3 See Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus's Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 120–181; Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 13–84.

4 Mark Dever, *What Is a Healthy Church?* 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 40.

5 Jeff Iorg, "North America as a Mission Field: The Great Commission on Our Continent," in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time*, eds. Chuck Lawless and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 228.

6 Ibid.

God to raise up multitudes of workers,” so that they might be funneled through the denomination’s mission agency. While mission leaders can troll colleges and seminaries for potential workers, the *multiplication* of future missionaries will only take place through healthy churches developing and training potential missionaries.⁷

ORGANIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The development of leaders for the early church took place *organically* rather than institutionally. The orientation of the church with small beginnings in Jerusalem and gradually expanding into Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the world, shows an intentional thrust in fulfilling the Great Commission (Acts 1:8). Jesus *prepared* his disciples to proclaim the gospel, and to establish communities of believers throughout the Roman Empire that would continue to do the same.

Clearly, as North Carolina pastor J. D. Greear explains the early practice, “God’s strategy for fulfilling the commission of Acts 1:8 was the planting of Acts 2:42–47 style churches in every city of the world.”⁸ We admire the way that the early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” The simplicity of community, generosity, service, table fellowship, and gratitude distinguished believers from their neighbors and heightened their gospel witness. The Lord raised up leaders to serve the expanding network of churches from that kind of lively discipling community atmosphere, as we will see in the next three chapters.

Does that approach seem too far-fetched for the sophisticated churches and strategies of the twenty-first century? While we have better organizational structures to help with developing pastoral leaders, we cannot improve upon the strength of healthy congregations birthing healthy leaders through a combination of pastoral oversight, congregational mentoring, and making the best use of academic training.

MENTORING NEW LEADERS

Although the vocabulary that explains mentors and trainees has expanded in our generation, for twenty centuries Christian workers have been mentored and trained to start new congregations and to serve as catalysts for reviving others. Those who would lead in pastoring churches—locally or globally—need to be

7 Tess Rivers, “Trustees: IMB’s Platt Unfolds Five-Point Strategy” [cited 4 December 2014], <http://www.bpnews.net/43691/trustees-imbs-platt-unfolds-fivepoint-strategy>.

8 J. D. Greear, “Great Commission Multiplication: Church Planting and Community Ministry,” in *The Great Commission Resurgence*, 342.

trained, at minimum, in apostolic doctrine, biblical theology, proclamation, ecclesiology, missiology, and spiritual leadership. We most often turn to the academy to provide this sort of intensive training. Yet, the New Testament demonstrates that the kind of training necessary for healthy pastoral leaders in any setting finds added effectiveness when rooted in the context of healthy models of community. As one regularly involved in training Christian leaders, Manhattan pastor Tim Keller's explanation of the importance of community makes the connection between the local church and ministry training.

Community shapes the nature of our witness and engagement in mission . . . shapes the development of our character . . . shapes our ethics and the spoken and unspoken rules that guide our behavior . . . is the key to true spirituality as we grow to know God by learning to know one another in relationships . . . [and] is perhaps the main way that we bear witness to the world, form Christ-like character, practice a distinctly Christian style of life, and know God personally.⁹

The practice of forming new communities of disciples, baptizing, and continuing to teach the disciples *in community* implies the need for effective leadership in these Great Commission tasks (Matt. 28:19–20).¹⁰ Paul spoke of the pastoral and leadership gifts of Christ to the church (Eph. 4:10–16), “as [Jesus] supplies the church with everything necessary to promote the growth of the body until it matches his own fullness,” as F. F. Bruce explained.¹¹ These gifts need cultivating and maturing in their use.¹² Jesus set the pattern: *Spiritual leaders working through community train leaders who will shepherd, plant, and revitalize discipling communities, who replicate the same work.*

How will new leaders prepare for the challenges of their ministry? Quite often, the training will take place in an academic setting. However, British author Stuart Murray, in discussing training church planters, points out the gaps that exist in theological education due to an emphasis on theory rather than application in theology. Then he makes a useful point that “perhaps *partnerships between local churches, networks, and training institutes* can provide leadership training which

9 Keller, *Center Church*, 311–314; see also 311–320 for more detailed explanation.

10 Ibid., 355–365.

11 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, F. F. Bruce, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 344–345.

12 See Colin Marshall, *Passing the Baton: A Handbook for Ministry Apprenticeship* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2007), 15–17, 34–39, for helpful examples.

will equip church planters with theological insights, spiritual resources, and practical skills to plant churches with solid foundations and the potential for creative reproduction.”¹³ His observation goes beyond church planters to include the broad scope of pastoral and missionary leadership. If church leaders are to be trained for their global tasks, then the training must eclipse the theoretical to embrace the experiential. It is not that the theoretical has no place in training—it does. Yet, while the academy normally appears best suited to expand on the theoretical, the local church brings theory into application and experience.

While preparing for ministry as a college student, my involvement in local churches shaped me spiritually, provided much-needed accountability, and gave me regular outlets for exercising my gifts in the body. Unfortunately, when I moved away to begin theological studies, my pattern lacked this same level of involvement. While my wife and I regularly attended church, we made lots of weekend trips to visit with family and friends, delaying settled involvement in the rhythm of a congregation. I failed to realize at the time how necessary the church was for our personal growth as well as our preparation for ministry. And yet, I was preparing to pastor! The emphasis on seminary without the intensity of congregational life diminished my theological and pastoral preparation.

I realize that many seminaries seek to bring the practical, experiential aspects of training into the curriculum. For instance, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBC) in Wake Forest, North Carolina does this through their Equip Network, as they combine an academic approach with local church pastoral mentoring. Reformed Theological Seminary has eight campuses strategically located, so that many students can attend seminary while continuing training in their home churches. Seminaries and Bible colleges hold special importance in ministry training. They address necessary subjects such as biblical languages, theology, hermeneutics, and homiletics. Yet the academy is not the church—the sphere in which those aspects of training will be most exercised. The partnership between academy *and* church both doing what they do best to train leaders, as proposed by Murray, presents an effective training model for equipping leaders.

JESUS’S EXAMPLE

In his classic work, *The Training of the Twelve*, A. B. Bruce, a nineteenth-century Scottish pastor and theology professor, asserted that Jesus’s statement in John 17:6, “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out

¹³ Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 227 (italics added).

of the world,” implied that “the principal part of His own earthly ministry” involved training those who would carry on the work he had initiated.¹⁴ Bruce made two important points that define what is meant by *leadership training*. These points serve as a helpful platform for exploring pastors and congregations mentoring leaders.

First, as a trainer, Jesus not only wanted disciples around him but also wanted them close and attentive to him. In that way, he might train them to make disciples as they replicated what they had intimately witnessed in his life. *Effective mentors seek to replicate their own lives and ministries with those they train*. Much of the replication happens in the full-orbed relationships of community, where real-life issues bring to surface the full application of the gospel to life. Only by life in community do trainees see the depth of genuineness in their mentor’s life.

During my college days, two local pastors who were about the same age served two of the city’s strongest churches. The first pastor spent an enormous amount of time investing in young men preparing for ministry. He kept them close, met with them for discussion, invited them along at special events, and made himself accessible to them. He made sure that they were woven into the fabric of the congregation. Even with his large church, he knew them all by name. Forty years later, I often run into men whom he mentored and shaped for ministry and missions.

The other pastor provided a superb example from the pulpit for biblical exposition but his rigid schedule seemed to have little time for young men preparing for ministry. While he gained more notoriety for his pulpit skills than the former pastor and spoke in many large churches, the former impacted a virtual army of pastors, missionaries, church planters, and Christian leaders. The latter eventually pastored one of the largest churches in the country, but the former multiplied his ministry exponentially by the time spent mentoring men for ministry. Effective mentors give priority to replicating their lives and ministries in those they train.

Second, Bruce described the work of the mentor as finely polishing the mirrors of the trainees so that they might “reflect the image of Christ.”¹⁵ Mentors polish the mirrors by speaking into the lives of their protégés so that they might better reflect the image of Jesus Christ in life and ministry. Polishing removes the rough edges, sharpens the focus, and brings out the strengths of trainees. *Yet mentors do not stand alone in polishing* (1 Thess. 1:6). The hands of a healthy congregation join him in smoothing and refining trainees who aspire to ministry. That has been my observation in three decades of mentoring for ministry. Only when trainees are

14 A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971 reprint from 1894), 13.

15 Ibid.

immersed into the life of the community, so that Christians sharpen Christians, are they properly honed and prepared for leading others.

One of our older ladies would regularly have younger couples in her home. While munching on her homemade sugar cookies and sipping coffee, she asked questions that led to fruitful, Christ-shaping conversation. Just over a month after this woman's death, my wife and I traveled to another country where we sat in the family room of a couple from our congregation who serve an unreached people group. As we talked, this dear saint's name came up, as did details of how she helped them to understand gospel application for their own lives. From her, they learned about living in the hope of Christ. While I taught them missiology and church planting, she taught them to rest each day in Christ. That's what I mean by mentors not standing alone in polishing their trainees. The congregation gets involved.

Bruce explained Jesus's training model as "a regular apprenticeship for the great office of apostleship, in the course of which they were to learn, in the privacy of an intimate daily fellowship with their Master, what they should *be, do, believe,* and *teach,* as His witnesses and ambassadors to the world."¹⁶ Jesus set the stage for developing healthy Christian leaders in every generation by establishing the goal and the method for training them. This basic approach to training can be followed and replicated in every generation.

First, the goal for trainees involves being, doing, believing, and teaching. (1) *Being* concerns spiritual formation. Unless the trainee develops in spiritual maturity, he may possess great gifts but these gifts alone will not suffice for kingdom work. Furthermore, *being* does not take place in isolation. It happens in community. Life together in community reveals the strengths and weaknesses in his spiritual formation. The way that he lives in relationship to others tests the genuineness of his spiritual maturity.

The community helps as well, by praying for one another, wrestling together with biblical texts, discussing good books that strengthen devotion to Christ, and fellowshiping together in the gospel. We do not mentor to develop cloistered monks but spiritual leaders, who will be immersed in shepherding God's flock. Spiritual formation taking place in the body deepens relationship toward God and one another.

(2) *Doing* refers to the actions or kingdom work that involves the whole gamut of living out the Christian life. *Doing* does not happen in isolation but with the community. Here, quite naturally, spiritual gifts develop in service to the body of Christ, as members get involved in serving one another. Relationships grow and find the challenge to love, forgive, accept, encourage, and serve. Until a trainee learns to

16 Ibid. (italics added).

serve others in the body, he remains unprepared for pastoral ministry or mission work or church leadership. I've found that the collegial atmosphere of the training cohort helps each member to better recognize and sharpen his gifts for ministry.

(3) *Believing* focuses on doctrine, insisting that the trainees will not do their work robotically, but rather out of an understanding of and reliance upon the doctrinal foundation established in Scripture. Believing becomes the motivation for perseverance in the work of ministry. Mentors set the stage for their trainees in grasping this theological reality as they demonstrate the practical application of doctrine to daily life. As the congregation that the trainees are part of lives out its understanding of Christian truth, trainees find intensive reinforcement to their faith.

(4) *Teaching* became the primary pastoral work carried on by Jesus's protégés, for as they taught, they set the content and application of the gospel at the heart of their ministries. So, too, those trained in a congregational setting should establish a priority on biblical teaching. Jesus gradually entrusted responsibilities to his disciples, step by step turning over the reins of ministry to them after his ascension. His disciples became the teachers of the first congregation in Jerusalem, as well as future congregations in the Roman world. Teaching remains foundational for the church's existence. That's why Jesus not only set the example in teaching, but also trained his disciples to go and do likewise.

At this point, mentors must hone the teaching and preaching gifts of trainees by providing opportunities to teach and preach, to discuss preparation, and to critique afterward. I've watched the steady progress of young men involved in our pastoral training ministry by trusting them with teaching and preaching, and then following up to shape them for the future. Several of our elders join me in this honing process. Those we've sent out to serve in pastoral or mission settings repeatedly thank us for the process that allowed them to learn to teach and preach with a "safety net." That aspect of our ministry continues to bear fruit today, with other congregations profiting from this investment in pastoral training.

Second, following the pattern of Jesus, the method used by mentors for their protégés involves doctrine, praxis, and sending. (1) As we will investigate more fully in the historical mentoring models, *doctrine* must stand at the heart of training pastors, church planters, church leaders, and missionaries. Doctrine must never be presumed with trainees. I've found it normal that some pastoral trainees lack doctrinal clarity in a number of areas. Sometimes it shows up in their preaching; other times in discussion. It will certainly be reflected in the way that they shepherd the flock. So mentors must press doctrinal precision, since it affects the whole of gospel ministry.

(2) *Praxis* refers to the actual experience of ministry rather than just talking about it in a sterile environment. Trainees engage in pastoral and mission work,

often under the direct supervision of a mentor, in order to test and hone their gifts, to learn to develop precision in various pastoral roles, and to give evidence of readiness to be involved in ministry. Both the historical and contemporary models that we'll consider in subsequent chapters will offer ways to bring praxis to the forefront in leadership training.

(3) The ultimate purpose for mentoring and training involves *sending* into ministry. Pastors and congregations join to prepare their trainees to embark upon places of ministry, maintaining ongoing encouragement, prayer, counsel, and support, as their protégés serve Christ's kingdom locally and globally.

THE WAY FORWARD

Despite no use of contemporary mentoring terminology, Jesus obviously mentored the Twelve and the Seventy (Luke 9–10) who engaged in mission work and church planting. Some of these, in turn, mentored others who followed in their steps. For example, New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham offers convincing evidence that the church father Papias (c. 70–163) learned the message of the gospel and its application from a firsthand hearing by either the Apostle John (called “John the Elder”) or another John who had apostolic training.¹⁷ Mentoring took place, though not likely in a formal sense so popular today, by sitting at the feet of those who knew the Lord, remembered his teaching, and understood the shape of how the gospel would be planted through communities of believers. This same mentoring pattern, although sometimes with more structure, has continued through the centuries.

The way forward in training Christian leaders cannot be left to perusing manuals or books. Missiologist D. Michael Crow observes, “We find that materials-without-mentoring tends to inoculate people. They think they’ve ‘got it’ when they really haven’t.”¹⁸ Just as Jesus engaged in life-on-life relationships with his disciples in the sphere of community, who then planted congregations and expanded mission work, even so contemporary church leaders find a replicable paradigm in Jesus and his disciples for mentoring those who will serve and establish churches. *The life-on-life relationship of mentors with trainees centered in local communities of Christ-followers remains the best way to shape a new generation of healthy Christian leaders.*

17 Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 12–38.

18 D. Michael Crow, “Multiplying Jesus Mentors: Designing a Reproducible Mentoring System—a Case Study,” *Missiology: An International Review* XXXVI.1 (January 2008): 106.