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The Role of the Church and Society in Mentoring the Next Generation

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Abstract

This study explores the role of the church and society in mentoring the next generation, with a focus on the biblical foundations of mentoring. The church is seen as a community of believers where members are nurtured and given the space to grow, discovering themselves in relation to God, fellow human beings, and the world. The concept of mentoring is examined, highlighting its origins in Greek texts and its association with discipleship, learning, and accompanying. The study explores biblical examples of mentoring, tracing its roots and biblical foundations in both the Old and New Testaments. It discusses the importance of church and societal mentorship for leadership development and succession planning, emphasizing the significance of intentional mentoring in developing effective leaders who can positively impact both the church and society. This study employed a qualitative, theological research approach, drawing on biblical and theological sources to explore the role of the church and society in mentoring. The study concludes that the church and society must prioritize mentoring initiatives by providing an environment that encourages mentorship, discipleship, and leadership development to empower the next generation.

Key Words: Role, Church, Society, Mentoring, Next Generation

Introduction

Mentoring has been an essential aspect of human development throughout history, with its roots tracing back to ancient Greek texts. Mentoring is very important in church and societal leadership development today. It is historically proven that mentoring remains the chief learning method in our society, where mentees learn not only the mechanics of a function but also the way of life that surrounds it. "The primary purpose of a facilitated mentoring process is to systematically develop the skills and competencies of less experienced people" (M. Murray 2001, p.5).

In Christianity, mentoring is deeply rooted in biblical foundations where discipleship, learning, and accompanying are core principles. The Church is not merely a physical structure but a community of believers called to fulfil God's mission in the world. Therefore, it is imperative that the church prioritizes the development of its members, particularly the next generation, to ensure continuity and growth.

Society also has a vital role to play in mentoring the next generation by creating opportunities and responsibilities for other societal institutions, such as schools, community organizations, and even businesses, to contribute to mentorship. As the church engages with the world, it must

recognize the significance of collaboration with societal institutions in empowering young people to become effective leaders.

1.0 Images of the Church as Basis for Mentoring

1.1 The Church as the Body of Christ

The church is the body of Christ by which he fulfils his earthly mission. This image emphasizes the church as the focal point of Christ's activity here on earth. It is the image that emphasizes the connection the church has as a community of believers with Christ. The "body" metaphor highlights the central idea of UNITY of many members of the church. Therefore the body of Christ is not merely a collection of individuals who subscribe to its philosophy. The members are the interrelated parts. This image is described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor.12: 18,20,21,26: "But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. As it is there are many parts but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you! And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you". If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Therefore this image reflects the church analogy of a human body equipped with various organs. The image of the body is forceful because it portrays the union of the church with its

Lord. Christ relates to the church as a head to its body. Christians relate to one another as limbs that cooperate. It is true then, as Ted Peters (2000, p.269) asserts: “Because he is the first – born of all creation” and “all things hold together” in him, “he is the head of the body, the church” (Col.1: 15-18). From this head the body is “nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments,” so that it “grows with a growth that is from God” (Col 2: 19). The sacraments indicate this corporal unity. “In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12: 13), united with Christ in his death and now raised to live the resurrected life (Rom 6:4- 5). Of the Eucharist Saint Paul writes, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). The image of the church as the body of Christ is mostly a Pauline notion (Rom 12, 1Cor 12, Eph 4:16). In its essence, it speaks of “the mutual union, mutual concern, and mutual dependence of the members of the local community upon one another” (Dulles 1987, p.50). This image gives the impression of a democratic tendency with a special emphasis on the immediate relationship of all believers in a non-hierarchical structure. The attention is on the mutual service of the members towards one another within the body. Pauline ecclesiology elaborates the great variety of services, functions and charisms

in the Body of Christ (Rom 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph 1:22f; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15). In a nutshell Paul emphasises the church “as an organism, as having a vital connection with Christ, as under the superintendence of Christ, as being a unit, although made up of Jews and Gentiles, as having a diversity of gifts among the members, and as ideally co-operating in the performance of one common task” (Theiessen 1979, p.307). This calls for a concept of ministry as the fostering of fellowship. The church as the Body of Christ is the gathering of God's family together as a brotherhood of living unity. They are together under Christ to build one another up.

1.2 The Church as Community

The church is a community of believers. It is a community of Christian faith. It is an informal or interpersonal community. The church is a brotherhood of a pure communion of persons. The focal word is *Koinonia* (fellowship), which refers to those having something in common. It is applied to the church as those having common salvation through a common faith in God and in his Son, Jesus Christ. “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Fellowship as having in common

also involves sharing and participation. “The church as God's Koinonia stresses the idea of a “society” whose primary characteristics are unity and love. One practical expression of Christ's love was that of sharing with the needy” (Duffield and van Cleave 1987, p.448).

The church is the new community guided by new rules and life among its members. Furthermore, the church is a community with one another based on community with Christ through the Holy Spirit. As a community the church is characterized by love for one another, serving one another, caring for one another, sharing life, setting an example for one another, and accepting one another. In the real sense, the church is a community where people discover themselves in relation to God, fellow human beings and the world. It is the place where members are discovered, nurtured and given the space to grow. W.O'Donovan (1996, p.155) expresses it rightly that “the church is the community where you are to get your values and beliefs and your early training in the Christian life. It is the community where you will establish the deepest and most enduring relationships in life. It is the group of people from which you derive your name as a Christian and your identity as a child of God. It is the community from which you find a sense of purpose in life because you help to make it

what it is by serving God and serving others”. Growth does not necessarily happen in isolation. It is in this community where a believer's function is “to carry and to be carried” (Heyns 1980, p.91). For a person to carry another, he must himself be drawn.

In essence the community's lifestyle is one of accepting and giving. It is the place where members are nurtured and are expected to nurture in turn. This means that the church is the community that concretely converses. It is the place where communication takes place in a multifaceted manner. The church exists on the relationships that are enhanced by communication. The Grace Baptist Church in Kempton Park, east of Johannesburg “bases their mentoring on the philosophy of community” (Patricia Ihlenfeldt: Interview). If the church does not have the sense of community, it will be difficult to implement mentoring initiative. The church as community represents Christ in the world. It is not a community that lives in isolation with independent Spirit. John Macquarrie (1971, p.396) is worth quoting in this regard. “This representing can be understood in a double sense, though both sides of the representing are closely connected. On the one hand, the Church represents Christ vicariously. We have already seen that, in the Pauline metaphor,

the Church is “ambassador” for Christ in the world. It continues to proclaim his message in his name, and to do his work in his name. It represents Christ in its ministry, first in its general ministry of reconciliation belonging to all its members, and in its specific ministries to which some of its members have been duly ordained. On the other hand, the Church represents Christ in the sense of making him present in the world. It does so in virtue of the fact that it is his body, or an “extension of the incarnation”.

1.3 The Church as the Family

The idea of the church as God's family and household is derived from the Old Testament where God's people are the house or the family of Israel. It is a nation grown from the family of Jacob, nurtured through the family culture. “Although in the Old Testament, God is spoken of as the Father of the whole house of Israel (Is 5:7; Ps 98:3), He is never referred to as the Father of an individual. Apparently, calling God “Father” is a privilege reserved for believers in Jesus Christ the Son” (Duffield and Van Cleave 1987, p.447). The family (*patria*) is a common New Testament word used for related people (Eph 3:15). It normally refers to people who are spiritually related to God. He being the author of their spiritual relationship to him as children, they being united to one

another in family fellowship. They belong to one household (*oikos*), which means that they live under one authority and belong to one father (God). The author of Hebrews declares that believers are members of God's family. “In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers” (Hebr. 2:10,11). “But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast” (Hebr 3:6). The church as the family provides the space and the environment for each member's growth. ” The church is the place – where the kingship, priesthood and prophetic work of Jesus is appropriated – taken on board, we might say” (Gunton 2002,p.123).

1.4 The Church as Servant

The two New Testament words “*doulos*” and “*diakonos*” relate to the church as servant. *Doulos* speaks of subjection without bondage. It speaks of voluntary obligation (Rom 6:19), a devotion to service or ministry (Acts 16:17) a spiritual, moral or ethical obligation (Rom 8:15,21; Gal 4:24). The church as a servant (*diakonos*) speaks of service by offering

one's self-ability to care for others" welfare. "It must be recognized that this term was sometimes used to designate a special ministry within the church. But scholarship is quite agreed that the more general use preceded the more technical. The Greek words were flexible enough to fit many types of servants and many forms of service" (Minear 1975, pp.59-160). The word carries the connotation of being an attendant or assistant (Acts 19:22). It speaks of supplying with the necessities of life or providing the means of living. This calls attention to the concept of being a steward (oikonomos), which is being a servant who administers the household (Lk 12:42; 4:1-12). This implies that the church as servant lives in someone else's house. The church is the servant of Christ in this world and is authorized to take care of the ministry of the word, sacraments and temporal help. The church is a servant of God in this world to carry out God's mission in the world.

2.0 The Concept of Mentoring

2.1 Mentoring

The word "mentoring" comes from the Greek word meaning enduring. The term "mentor" originated in Homer's *Odyssey* when Ulysses engaged the service of a wise man named Mentor. While Ulysses was fighting in the Trojan War, he needed someone to tutor his son, Telemachus. He

instructed Mentor to teach the boy "not only in book learning but also in the wiles of the world" (Engstrom 1989, p.3).

Mentoring is as old as history. It originates in Greek texts and is associated with the concepts of discipleship, learning and accompanying. In a more secular setting mentorship is closely associated with coaching, counselling or sponsorship. Mentoring was the traditional method of passing on wisdom and knowledge from fathers to sons. It develops leadership traits, improves communication skills, builds relationships, and establishes the mentee in career and a solid footing in the community. As a concept, it can be theologically applied. Within the Christian framework, mentoring is linked with the discipleship process. The Greek word "manthanō", meaning to learn, indicates the thought of following someone's teaching. This following is interactional, as highlighted by the disciples of Jesus Christ and of John the Baptist: How is it that we and the Pharisees fast? (Mt. 9:14); What is your opinion? (Mt. 22:16-17)

Mentoring is the process wherein questions are probed in order to facilitate understanding and in order to be the imitators of the teacher. In this case it is to be the imitator of Christ who is in the place of a mentor. The biblical implication of mentoring leads to the concise definition of

mentoring as having a significant person in life who is willing to provide guidance or support. It is “a process of opening our lives to others, of sharing our lives with others, a process of living for the next generation” (Davis 1991, p.19). This means that a mentoring relationship is a life of transparency. It is a life of walking together in the light (1 Jhn 1:17). It is a lifelong relationship in which two people drop their masks of public and private lives in order to communicate at a deeper level. Bobb Biehl (1996, p.22) says, “it is simply two people who enjoy each other and want to see each other win, helping each other over a period of time. Their relationship involves companionship, camaraderie, correction, and simple friendship”. There is no place for jealousy or reservations in a mentoring relationship. The goal is a win-win situation wherein both the mentor and the mentee come out as jewels for the kingdom of God. Mentoring is a “process of developing a man or a woman to his or her maximum potential in Jesus Christ in every vocation” (Engstrom 1989, p.4).

Mentorship is a cost-effective means of providing vital learning for new converts or members of the church. It honours the personality, commitment and skills of the mentee as well as the practice of Christian discipleship. It also adorns Christian leadership and makes it not only

professional, but also desirable and honourable. It is justifiable to attest that mentoring is a leadership by demonstration. It cannot be formally established or forced upon the mentor or mentee. It evolves naturally and continues to maintain a growing bond that brings joy and blessing to both the mentor and mentee.

Russell West (1984, p.15) explains that mentoring is not a recent innovation; instead, the process merely has been ignored for a long time. “The church is rediscovering mentoring as an indispensable strategy for developing leaders because it attends to the demands of the relational-based ministry that churches develop today”. In order to achieve the purpose of training effective leaders, the church needs to be intentional. Making new leaders does not happen unless the leader intentionally emphasizes the progression (Galloway, 2001, p.12). Jesus was an intentional mentor. He selected twelve, stayed with them, taught, trained, and sent them.

2.2 Biblical Foundations of Mentoring

The Bible always must provide the foundation for belief and practice within the Christian church. Therefore this study examines mentoring and leadership development in light of the Bible. The

Church is God's organization and so runs according to the precepts of the Scriptures.

2.3 Mentoring in the Old Testament

The Old Testament provides an example of mentoring in the relationship between Jethro and Moses as recorded in Exodus 18:13-27. Furthermore, Joshua learned about leadership from Moses, which eventually prepared Joshua for the work of taking God's people to the promise land. The relationship between Eli and Samuel provides another example of mentoring (1 Sam 2:11; 3:1). Samuel served as a mentor both to Saul and to David. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha presents another clear example of mentoring. (1 Kings 2:13-15).

1. Jethro and Moses. With Yahweh's help, Moses brought the children of Israel out from the bondage of Egypt. Throughout the day, he presided over the disputes of a congregation of almost two million people (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1995). When Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, saw Moses before the people, Jethro warned Moses to watch for signs of certain exhaustion. He taught Moses the principle of delegation by asking him to choose men of worthy character to serve under his authority and reserve only the most difficult disputes for his personal involvement (Exod. 18:13-27). As a result, Israel's judicial system was

organized according to Jethro's instruction. The new system allowed for faster judgment of cases than did Moses' previous arrangement. Jethro mentored Moses by serving as an adviser and teaching him how to operate the new system of delegating different assignments for varying levels of leadership. Moses may have lived a healthy and long life as a result of Jethro's mentoring.

2. Moses and Joshua. Before God chose Joshua to succeed Moses, Joshua already had worked alongside Moses, acting as his assistant (Exod. 24:13; Deut. 1:38). Joshua displayed a high level of faith and confidence in God's promises in spite of an opposite expression from ten others as they went to spy the land. Initially, Joshua was in charge of the military while still subject to Moses. After this experience he gained other skills before he eventually accepted full responsibility when Moses died. This spiritual strength and faith must have been impacted in his life as he stayed to serve Moses, the man of God.

3. Eli and Samuel. Eli served as a mentor to the young Samuel. Since Samuel lived with Eli, this mentoring relationship resembled an apprenticeship. He began staying with Eli during childhood. Later, Eli guided Samuel to discern God's voice (1 Sam. 3:2-10). In many ways Eli acted like a father to Samuel.

4. Samuel mentored Saul and David.

Samuel discovered Saul while Saul was searching for his father's missing donkey. He counseled Saul and helped to give him God's instruction, although Saul mostly disobeyed the instruction. (1 Sam. 13:8-14; chap. 15). Samuel kept praying for Saul in spite of his pride and rebellion. Samuel was a great encouragement to David, as well. David eventually became Israel's greatest king. This story illustrates how leaders can support those persons they mentor, especially when the mentee cooperates with the mentor.

5. Elijah and Elisha. The relationship between Elijah and Elisha offers another example of a mentoring relationship. Elijah sought Elisha because of God's revelation. God's calling was made clear to Elijah about Elisha. Elisha eventually became Elijah's attendant, but his real aim was to raise a successor. In spite of his rich background, Elisha abandoned everything to leave with Elijah (2 Kings 2:2-6). The story of Elijah's departure in 2 Kings 2 features commitment, loyalty, and love. The story terminates as Elisha receives Elijah's mantle succeeds him as prophet, and the river Jordan divides (2 Kings 2:13-15). Other examples of mentoring in the Old Testament include that of Jehoida and Joash in 2 Chronicles 24.

2.4 Mentoring in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus mentored his twelve disciples for three years before he eventually commissioned them. The meaning of the word disciple is a pupil or learner. Jesus devoted the majority of his time to his disciples, and they observed him as he ministered to people. They were with him (Mark 3:14), and they enjoyed a deep relationship with him. Later in the New Testament, Barnabas mentored Paul when Paul became converted to the Christian faith (Acts 9:26-31). In addition, Barnabas continued to mentor John Mark even when Paul felt they should leave the younger man behind. Paul himself became a worthy mentor of Timothy and Titus. Hence, Scripture indicates the importance of mentoring in relation to leadership development and succession.

1. Jesus and his disciples. The ministry of Jesus offers a clear example of effective mentoring. He began his ministry by calling a few men to follow him. Robert E. Coleman writes, "Jesus started to gather these men before he ever organized an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public. Men were to be his method of winning the world to God". This point must continue to be emphasized to have continuity of the Christian message. Although Jesus did not choose to mentor the rich or the religious elite of his day, Jesus' mentees were willing to learn.

Coleman writes, “Jesus can use anyone who wants to be used. We cannot transform a world, except individuals in the world are transformed. Jesus did not neglect the crowd but he concentrated on the few disciples”. The same thing must become the principle for meaningful transformation in the churches and the society in general.

Coleman summarized the other principles Jesus used in mentoring his disciples. Jesus lived with his disciples, which constitutes the principle of association. He required obedience from them, which represents the principle of consecration. He gave himself away, which the principle of impartation describes. He also showed them how to live; this action fits Coleman’s description of the principle of demonstration. Jesus then assigned work to his disciples, according to the principle of delegation. He oversaw them which Coleman describes as the principle of supervision. Finally, Jesus expected them to reproduce, or to mentor others (Coleman, 1963, p.25).

Mentoring represents a major way of teaching in the Old Testament and in the days of Jesus. Jesus trained his disciples in informal settings such as while they ate, traveled, and prayed throughout their shared life experience. They did almost everything together, even attending weddings and funerals, and they observed the way Jesus did things. According to

Gunter Krallmann, this shared life involves the transference of knowledge, skill, and character through the combination of teaching and modeling that comes in a shared life experience.

Jesus gave his disciples the opportunity to practice that which they had learned. When they made mistakes, Jesus corrected them. Apart from when he asked them to go out to preach, he also demonstrated to them by modeling many of his own teachings. One vivid lesson occurred when Jesus demonstrated humility and love by washing the disciples’ feet in John chapter 13. Accordingly, Jesus had a dual motivation in his mission, namely to reach the lost and to provide his disciples with a practical education experience (Bruce, 1971, p.22).

The custom of foot washing is an old practice in hospitality. The task of washing a guest’s feet generally fell upon the servants in the house. Jesus poured water into a bowl and girded himself with a towel to wash his disciples’ feet. His leadership was not that of seeking people to serve him. Instead, Jesus relinquished his position as the boss and teacher and took the form of a servant. He even overturned societal status (Keener, 1993, p.32). Jesus’ action was not merely an act of servitude, but also an act of love (Thomas, 1991, p.10).

Disciples normally serve their teachers, just as Joshua served Moses and Elisha attended Elijah. Jesus changed this role as he washed his disciples' feet. In verses 12-17 of John 13, Jesus challenged the disciples through his action. Wenham, Motyer, Carson, and France write, "The authoritative nature of his approach is unmistakable, but the command becomes even more striking when it is remembered that humility was despised in the ancient world as a sign of weakness" (1054). The same has become a major trait among leaders in many churches in Africa today.

After Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he told them that he had set an example for them. Jesus told his disciples to serve one another in humility rather than seek pre-eminence over one another, and so to lay down their lives for one another (John 15:13).

The cleansing and foot washing symbolize the revelation that Jesus gave of the father, and thus the disciples are called upon to embody this same revelation. As such, Jesus instructed his disciples to pass on the lesson that he, their teacher and lord, had provided by conveying both in word and deed, the selfless love of God (Barrett, 1987, p.9). The Christian community Jesus introduced manifested God's love that Jesus revealed through serving others with no vestige of pride or position. The exercise

of leadership requires following this model of servanthood. Christ expressed his love by washing the disciples' feet and through his upcoming sacrificial death. He laid down his life for his friends on the cross. Jesus demonstrated the kind of love his disciples and his future followers ought to show one another. In the story of the washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus mentors his disciples as he demonstrates and models his expectations for them.

2. Paul and Timothy. Paul exhibited effective mentoring in his relationship with Timothy. He calls him "my true child in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). Paul, at different times, expresses his love to young Timothy. He also challenged him not to be discouraged.

Paul influenced Timothy greatly. He traveled with Timothy to many places, and Timothy was chosen to become the overseer of the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:2). Paul also sent Timothy to address problems in Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17). He became a good representative of Paul:

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interest, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son

with his father he has served
with me in the work of the
Gospel. (Phil. 2:19-22)

Oswald Sanders writes, “Paul’s exacting standards, high expectations, and heaving demands served to bring out the best in the young man, saving him from the peril of mediocrity” (Paul the Leader 180). This pattern is an example of mentoring that Paul left as a heritage within the pages of the New Testament.

3.0 The Mentoring Examples from the Church History

The concept of mentoring continued throughout Church history. History brings the past and its lessons to life. It authenticates our present and helps us to chart the way for the future. Mentors have been around perhaps as long as the human race.

History proves that the minds of the great thinkers have been passed from generation to generation. James M Houston (2002, p.15) rightly asserts “Their efficacy as teachers also has been in being exemplars, providing a way of life that could be imitated in deed as well as thought.” Spiritual direction was the primary model at work in the Egyptian desert in the fourth century, and this custom continued to operate effectively among clergy and members of religious orders for centuries.

A few examples on mentoring in the history of the Christian Church will be instructive.

Examples in Church History

Polycarp was a student of the Apostle John. John appointed him Bishop of Smyrna (Bettenson 71; Cairns 76). This appointment certainly took place after he had been properly groomed by the Apostle. Papias who wrote the Interpretations of the Sayings of the Lord in the middle of the second century most likely also was a disciple of John.

Papias was the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. In addition, Polycarp’s preaching also influenced Irenaeus, the anti-gnostic polemicist, while Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna.

Even St. Augustine, the great theologian of the church, did not form and develop as a leader by himself; instead, he was a disciple of Bishop Ambrose of Milan. James E. Reed and Ronnie Prevost say that Augustine, after his baptism, moved to Hippo where he became a priest and later a bishop.

Origen (AD 185-254) was mentored by Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-215) and succeeded him in the leadership of the catechetical school in Alexandria, which greatly influenced Christian thought

(Cairns, 1996, p.16). This example is another point in explaining how the ancient fathers were properly mentored as they were being prepared for ministry

The German reformer Martin Luther mentored his associate Philip Melanchthon. Melanchthon continued the work even after Luther's exile. John Wesley maintained a close link with members of his movement and organized his converts into societies. In 1742, the societies were subdivided into classes of ten to twelve under a lay leader who had spiritual oversight of the class.

4.0 Church and Society Mentoring, Along With Leadership Development, for the Next Generation

4.1 Church and Society Mentorship

History attests to the use of mentoring in transmitting values and resources from one generation to another. Max De Pree (1989, p.25) asserts that continuous development and maturation of leaders is one of society's significant needs, based on his many years of mentoring and being mentored. A popular saying claims that success without a successor is failure. Therefore, in order for leadership to sustain positive change, leaders must develop a strong succession plan. De Pree believes that mentoring, a give-and-take relationship, is the most

effective way to guide people with leadership gifts toward their potential.

Leaders can be developed through education or experience (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy 2003, p.15). Making the most of experience is the key to developing leadership ability. Leadership development depends not just on the kind of experiences but also on how potential leaders use them to foster growth. Therefore associates and friends can stimulate development in different ways.

The events of history and observation reveal that transition in leadership easily can be the most traumatic event in any organization's history. Succession in leadership makes tremendous impact on any ministry and dramatically affects the leader, his or her executive team, staff and board, the constituency, donors, and outside public (Erickson, 2004, p.13). Some of the world's leaders have experienced great success, but because they failed miserably at succession, their life accomplishments collapsed shortly after departure (Barna, 1997, p.19).

The impact of the leader in helping to affect a good succession plan cannot be over emphasized. Barna writes, "No other activity guarantees the perpetuation of the ministry after the incumbent is gone as much as a well-planned and carefully

executed transition”. This idea is an easy one to promote among many indigenous churches in Africa and more specifically in Nigeria.

When faced with potential transitions, some leaders face change, embrace it and make it their own, and fight the process. As a result, sometimes these leaders are forced out, thus destroying relationship and tarnishing the ministry’s good name. God has a purpose for each individual, and the leader in ministry must know that the ministry is not his or hers but God’s. This knowledge will help the leader surrender to God’s timing and plan. A leader must be ready to pass the baton to a successor and this aspect is a major challenge of leadership today. An organization must provide today the man who can run it tomorrow.

Peter F. Drucker asks CEOs of various companies several questions:

1. Are we attracting people we are willing to entrust this organization to?
2. Are we developing them so that they are going to be better than we are?
3. Are we holding them, inspiring them, and recognizing them?

4. Are we building for tomorrow as we make our decisions about people today?

Wallace Erickson writes, “it is good to always fill each vacancy with people better qualified than those we had before”. Many leaders in places like Nigeria do not consider it easy to hire people with greater qualifications; instead, some leaders choose to hire mediocre people. In order to develop an organization’s leadership capacity, the wise leader will prefer having strong, effective, challenging people around him or her than risk being served by mediocre persons. When a leader finds good people with unusual natural gifts who are receptive and excited about the vision of the ministry, the leader should invest time, energy, and money to develop them in every conceivable way he or she can.

4.2 Mentoring in Traditional Nigerian Society

Leadership development has been a part of various professions within the typical Nigerian society. The concept of mentoring is embedded in the apprenticeship form of education. According to Babatunde Fafunwa, a foremost educator and former Minister of Education in Nigeria, before the advent of the European order, all the Nigerian ethnic groups had their own distinctive cultures, traditions, languages,

and indigenous systems of education. They all had common educational aims and objectives, but their methods differed from place to place as dictated by social, economic, and geographical circumstances.

Within the old Nigerian society, functionality was the guiding principle. The society regarded education as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Education was an immediate induction into the society and preparation for adulthood. Children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through imitation, recitation, and demonstration particularly during ceremonies and ritual (Fafunwa, 1974, p.18). Indigenous education was therefore an integrated experience, combining physical and intellectual training with character-building disciplines. The aims, contents, and methods of indigenous education “were intricately interwoven; they were not divided into separate compartments as is the case with western education”. Africans tend to see everything in wholeness and not in fragments.

Nigerians in traditional societies raise farmers, weavers, hunters, and even traditional leaders using these methods. At different stages of education, students take practical tests relevant to their experience. In a traditional sense, the father is the male child’s first mentor, and subsequent mentors assume a patriarchal posture.

However, over time, and with the influence of individualism from the West, such practice is gradually fading.

Vanessa P. Dennen describes apprenticeship as an inherently social learning method with a long history of helping novices become experts in fields as diverse as midwifery, construction, and law. More experienced people assist less experienced people, providing structure and examples to support the attainment of the goals. Dennen asserts that apprenticeship as a method of teaching and learning is just as relevant within the meta-cognitive domain as in the psychomotor domain. Of course, as already discussed among the indigenous Nigerian people, apprenticeship is the major way of mentoring. Today I note that the West is now attempting to teach Nigerians about this type of mentoring.

In discussing mentoring from the Nigerian perspective of relationship or apprenticeship, Andy Roberts describes eight necessary attributes:

(1) a process form, (2) an active relationship, (3) a helping process, (4) a teaching and learning process, (5) reflective practice, (6) a career and personal development process, (7) a formalized process, and (8) a role constructed by or for a mentor. These attributes if used within the

context of the culture of the people could be very effective.

Research among clergy in African American congregations also confirms the effectiveness of mentoring through intentional apprenticeship. In the research carried out by Timothy Larkin in his doctoral research in sociology in 2007, Larkin evaluated this pattern as still effective. He examined the extent and variations in apprenticeship patterns across the different dimensions of region, class, religious denomination, and age.

Conclusion

The role of the church and society in mentoring the next generation is crucial for leadership development and succession planning. The biblical foundations of mentoring, as explored in this study, provide a solid framework for understanding the importance of intentional mentoring in developing effective leaders who can positively impact both the church and society. The images of the church as the body of Christ, community, family, and servant highlight the interconnectedness and interdependence of believers, emphasizing the need for mutual service, care, and support. The concept of mentoring, rooted in Greek texts and associated with discipleship, learning, and accompanying, provides a valuable model

for passing on wisdom, knowledge, and skills from one generation to the next. As the church seeks to fulfill its mission in the world, it is essential to prioritize mentoring initiatives that foster growth, development, and leadership among its members. By doing so, the church can ensure the continuation of its mission and ministry, and society can benefit from the positive impact of well-equipped and empowered leaders. Ultimately, the church and society must work together to provide a supportive environment that encourages mentorship, discipleship, and leadership development, thereby empowering the next generation to make a meaningful difference in the world.

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