

Organic Ministry: Early Church Practices of Mentoring and Mission

by

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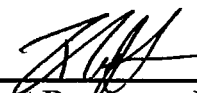
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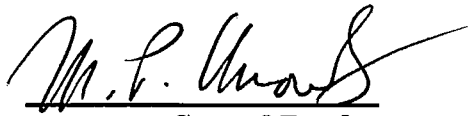
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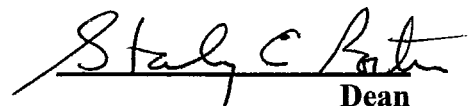
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## ABSTRACT

### Organic Ministry: Early Church Practices of Mentoring and Mission

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Organic ministry is a term that describes the matrix of life-to-life mentoring that is found in the biblical tradition of the spiritual community of families, house churches and mission teams. The *familia Dei* and the *missio Dei* inform our focus on mentoring and mission. The family became the organic structure around which the early church community was built. House churches provided a place for transformational social dynamics to be worked out as spiritual fictive kinship challenged blood kinship as well as social structures. Ministry was developed through a network of organic relationships in the early church, and this should cause leaders to reconsider approaching ministry merely as a leadership function that requires institutional support.

Mentoring that is grounded in community and mission builds authentic relationships and develops organic ministry. The missional community advances the Kingdom of God and engages in the mission of God by sharing the gospel through relational networks. Mentoring in this context provides for transformational growth, is focused on character development, and maintains a missional focus. Modern patterns of mentoring help to inform our understanding of mentoring, but often are contrived or individualistic. The organic missional church will provide a backdrop for exploring missional values and practices that reinforce authentic mentoring relationships.

## **Acknowledgements/Dedication**

I have thoroughly enjoyed the process of doing my Masters at McMaster Divinity College. I entered somewhat jaded about the seminary process and wondered about how an academic degree could serve me practically. I can say that the professors, staff and fellow students changed my perspective and gave me an appreciation for the academic world. God used each course as a means to work on my life and character. The culmination of these studies is this thesis. I am thankful to McMaster for helping me in my spiritual journey and stretching me academically. It has been a fun ride.

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I dedicate this study to my wife, Lynette, and my children Andrew, Kristen and Elena, who do not realize that they are such encouragements to me and mentor me in many ways.

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Organic Ministry: Biblical understanding of mentoring	6
a. First century learning patterns	7
b. Biblical mentoring models	11
c. The apprenticeship model of Jesus	12
d. Paul's ministry teams and missional learning	14
e. Paul's commitment to develop leaders	18
2. The family of God as a foundation for mentoring	21
a. Family as a base of ministry	21
b. Brothers and sisters- Philemon	26
c. Becoming spiritual parents- 1 Thessalonians	31
3. The role of house churches in the mentoring process	35
a. The role of the house church in mission	35
b. Men and women leading in community	41
c. Community practices: Loving God and people	46
4. Organic mentoring in mission	51
a. The Mission of God	51
b. Missional perspective	54
c. Becoming insiders in mission	56
d. Taking people into mission- globally and locally	59
5. Mentoring today: Exploring modern mentoring patterns	62
a. A new horizon for mentoring	62
b. Mentoring within contemporary business literature	67
c. Mentoring through spiritual retreats	70
d. Mentoring through discipleship programs	72
e. Mentoring in the local church	75
f. Group mentoring: benefits and obstacles	76
6. Organic Ministry: Strategic thoughts for today's church	79
a. Becoming a missional church	79
b. Missional values, disciplines and skills	85

**Introduction:**

There is a story of a Russian priest wandering the roads on a wintry night who is challenged by a soldier:<sup>1</sup> “Who are you?” “Where are you going?” “Why are you going there?” The priest gave a strange response, inquiring how much the soldier was paid. He then said, “I will double it if you stop me every day and ask me these same three questions.” For the priest knew that these questions are critical in our growth as people and especially for those of us involved in ministry.

This story describes the value of someone who can enter into our lives as a coach, guide or mentor and ask penetrating questions. The term mentor comes from Homer’s *Odyssey*. Mentor is the name of the trusted friend who in Ulysses’ absence protects, nurtures, educates and guides his son Telemachus into adulthood. Mentor becomes the guardian of his household and a teacher, advisor, friend and surrogate father.<sup>2</sup> Mentoring is the process of learning from others, where the mentor passes on life knowledge to mentoring partners who are normally younger or less experienced. We will argue for a more organic, communal and missional approach to mentoring.

Organic ministry is a term that describes the matrix of life-to-life mentoring that is found in the biblical tradition of the spiritual community of families, house churches and mission teams. Organic means something grounded in nature, with a built in propensity towards growth and multiplication. Simson says: “When we understand that the church is a creation of God, a ‘biotic’ organism, we must look for God’s natural, organic principles to understand how it grows.”<sup>3</sup> Organic also implies growth and multiplication. It is the organic relationships within a family and among friends, in a

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<sup>1</sup> Cashman, *Inside Out*, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Sellner, *Spiritual Kinship*, 14-15. Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Simson, *Houses*, 15. See also Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things*, 63.

house church or on a ministry team that can provide us with organic ministry patterns. When ministry reflects hierarchical institutions and employs a master plan model, then organic growth is hindered; organization replaces organism. Organic ministry seeks to develop an environment where community can emerge, thus encouraging organic growth and multiplication.<sup>4</sup>

The *familia Dei* (Lat) and the *missio Dei* (Lat)<sup>5</sup> inform our focus on mentoring and mission. God desires to see the family of God express Kingdom values of identity and purpose. The family became the organic structure around which the early church community was built. House churches provided a place for transformational social dynamics to be worked out, as spiritual fictive kinship challenged blood kinship as well as social patterns. The house church also gave missional teams a base for ministry and a training ground for future leaders.

In Chapter One, we will examine the Biblical pattern of mentoring by understanding the social context of the first century. We will observe how mentoring occurred in the organic settings of families, or with teachers and leaders. A teacher had a cluster of disciples around him in a small learning community. Jesus invested in his few disciples and his teaching moments happened in the unstructured organic moments of living life together. The apostle Paul worked in a team context and much of his instruction and training happened in clusters, as they were engaged in mission. Paul

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<sup>4</sup> Myers, *Organic Community*, 169. Myers builds on this idea of organic order (leadership) rather than working from a master plan. See also his previous book on small group ministry: Myers, *Search to Belong*.

<sup>5</sup> *Familia Dei* means family of God, which we will examine in chapter two. *Missio Dei* refers to the mission of God, which we will examine in chapter four. As we identify Greek, Latin or Hebrew words we will indicate their origin with (Gk, Lat, Heb) the first time and not repeat it afterwards.



formed ministry teams that created organic ministry opportunities, especially as the teams moved into different geographical settings.

In Chapter Two we look at the family setting in the New Testament. In the organic process of living life we have the opportunity to engage in authentic mentoring. The healthy family can be seen as the basis for organic mentoring. There is a less hurried approach to life when we think of ministry in natural life cycles. The early church provided for new 'brothers and sisters' for the first converts, forming new spiritual families. The gospel was transferred through natural relationships, through family and working contacts. The *oikos* (Gk) or household was the locus of gospel growth. The book of Philemon informs this discussion, while spiritual parenting is demonstrated strongly in 1 Thessalonians. The organic mentoring process we see in the apostle Paul is steeped in a deep love for his people.

In Chapter Three we look at the early house churches. We were unable to find concrete evidence of mentoring methods within the early house churches, but were able to see how organic ministry and mentoring principles were expressed in these small missional communities. The social structure of the family and layering of church within families created some social challenges. We will comment on how organic ministry in the house church provided for the opportunity for gender partnership in ministry. We will examine the communal practices in the early church and connect them with mentoring.

In Chapter Four we look at mentoring in mission. The apostle Paul carried on the Mission of God as a part of extending the Kingdom of God. Paul had a missional perspective that reflected Kingdom values in how to see the world. Paul strategically

built his mission around insiders, the ones who are natural to a culture. Taking people into mission challenges the lenses through which they see life. This involves brokenness and vulnerability, as people need to move out of their comfort zones into voluntary displacement. This assists mentors in dealing with deeper growth issues for mentoring partners<sup>6</sup> and keeps the Kingdom at the centre of the mentoring process.

In Chapter Five, we examine our Western individualistic emphasis and look for a more organic mentoring model. In the process of understanding mentoring we will examine some of the assumptions around mentoring and critically compare patterns of mentoring found in business, discipleship programs, the spiritual discipline movement, and in churches. We want to look at the benefits and obstacles in each model of mentoring. We will especially note how modern mentoring could be improved with an organic ministry approach.

In Chapter Six, we call for churches to embrace an organic ministry model that moves us out of a fortress mentality into a missional posture. Being united with others in an adventure, forces us into a dependency on one another. Building identity, authenticity and character within strong communal relationships are values for today's church. We will suggest that practices of journaling, seeking truth, and positive accountability in growth groups are important in mentoring. The mentor needs to develop skills of asking questions and listening.

Mentoring is most often seen as an individualistic pursuit. The one-to-one approach may be rooted in a self-centred pursuit to get ahead, or towards expanding one's influence, or can be affected by finances or by ensuring that we develop healthy

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<sup>6</sup> We prefer to use the egalitarian term *mentoring partner* (see Stoddard and Tamasey) instead of the more clinical word *protégé*.

contributors in society. The better questions to ask are: What kind of community are we? How can we grow together? Are we are a community of compassion, care and love? If God's own reality is a relational community expressed in the Trinity, should not our mentoring reflect more of a relational and community model? Surely there must be room for an organic process of mentoring that is much more familial and communal in approach. Have we allowed our western individualistic mindset to influence the mentoring process? Myers says, " Shaping an environment where people naturally connect is more like creating art than manufacturing a product. It marks a major shift: from programming community (i.e., following a *master plan*) to using principles of *organic order* to develop an environment where community can emerge."<sup>7</sup> An organic ministry approach to mentoring that is founded on Biblical and early church patterns will assist us in developing a more integrated model of mentoring.

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<sup>7</sup> Myers, *Organic Community*, 27.

## **Chapter One: Biblical Understanding of Mentoring**

By examining the social context of the first century we hope to see the place that mentoring had in the midst of education and life, especially in the ministries of Jesus and the apostle Paul. In this chapter, we will look at some Biblical mentoring models, primarily in the New Testament. We will see how Jesus invested his life in his disciples and the others around him. Jesus employed an apprenticeship model with learning happening usually in small groups. We will look at Paul and his early commitment to training others as part of a team. His teaching should be viewed as one leadership community addressing another community. Despite addressing individual concerns, Paul wanted the lessons passed on to others. We want to answer the following questions: What was the style of learning in the first century? Where do we find mentoring models in the Scriptures? How did Jesus mentor others? What group dynamics were at work in his teaching moments? How did the apostle Paul mentor others? What part did ministry teams play in his teaching and mentoring?

Mentoring involves intentionally helping others deal with life. Mentoring is part of ministry and should be distinguished from teaching. Teaching could certainly be a part of mentoring but it can also occur in a large group. Mentoring however is more personal and occurs in small groups or individually. Jesus and Paul displayed mentoring practices. Regarding the organic nature of God's vision of the church, Hirsch comments,

“...the Bible is laced with organic images that engender an ‘ecological view’ of church and leadership (seeds, ground, yeast, body, flock, trees, etc.). If we remodelled our leadership and churches with these organic metaphors in mind, we would develop a more fertile communal life. An organic view of church is much

richer because it is truer to, and more consistent with, the inner structure of life and cosmology itself.”<sup>1</sup>

God wants our relationship with him to naturally reflect our relationships in creation.

God wants us to view him as Father, as Friend. God wants a relationship with his creation and part of that relationship is to teach and mentor us. The idea of mentoring in the Bible can be found in God’s earliest relationships. Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden and related to him as a mentor and a friend.<sup>2</sup> Jesus was recognized as a teacher, mentor and rabbi.<sup>3</sup> Bruce Demarest develops his mentoring principles based on Jesus’ ministry.<sup>4</sup> We will examine the pattern of organic mentoring found in Jesus and the apostle Paul in more detail, but first we need to understand learning patterns in the first century.

### **First Century Learning Patterns**

Jewish learning patterns centred on the synagogue. The synagogue had been developed during the inter-Testamental period. Jewish believers could not attend the Temple in Jerusalem in a regular way, so a gathering place was built where ten or more adult men could gather for worship, reading the scriptures and prayer.<sup>5</sup> One man was democratically selected to be the prayer leader for that day, which was a great honour. In Luke 4:16-30 we get an example of how the meeting around the reading of the Sabbath lesson might have been. Jesus read from Isaiah and gave its interpretation.

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<sup>1</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 166. See also Myers, *Organic Community*.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:26-31. Scriptural quotes will use the CEV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>3</sup> Sellner, *Spiritual Kinship*, 27. See Clinton and Stanley, *Connecting* for a description of various levels of mentoring from Passive Mentoring (Contemporary, Historical), to Occasional Mentoring (Counseling, Teaching, Sponsoring), to Intensive Mentoring (Discipling, Spiritual Guiding, Coaching). This theme is followed by Egeler in *Mentoring Millennials*, 85.

<sup>4</sup> Demarest, *Soul Guide*.

<sup>5</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*. 147 and following. The basis of this chapter on New Testament learning is found in Ward’s work.

Groups of young men would gather around an older teacher to discuss aspects of the Torah.<sup>6</sup>

For the family, early education was the responsibility of the parents. Children would see their fathers go to the synagogue and the principles of Deuteronomy 6:5-8 would be practised regularly. Formal schooling began for boys at age five, where they were enrolled in the *bet hasfer* (Heb)<sup>7</sup>, or “house of the book.” There a boy spent at least half a day, six days a week, for the next five years.<sup>8</sup> They learned the Torah orally through memorization. During the rest of the day, boys would learn a trade from their father.

At ten, certain boys would go to an advanced class called the *bet Talmud* (Heb), or “the house of learning.” There they would learn not just the written law but also the oral law, which became the *Mishnah* (Heb). They would again memorize the rest of the Old Testament and begin to discuss with the teacher the various interpretations of the law and how it might work itself out in daily life. The teacher would use parables and engage in animated question and answer sessions, probing his students in the appropriate applications of the law.<sup>9</sup>

The final step in education was for the select few and was the path towards becoming a scribe. Students went to an advanced school called the *bet midrash* (Heb), the “house of study.” This was not so much a place, but a group of teachers that was most often dominated by a prominent teacher. The apostle Paul refers to his learning

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<sup>6</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*. 147.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*. 151. To be consistent we will use the Hebrew spelling that Ward employs.

<sup>8</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*. 151.

<sup>9</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*. 152-153.

under Gamaliel.<sup>10</sup> Memorization continued, but writing was also part of the curriculum. Although up to this time the focus had been solely on the Hebrew Scriptures, now the student began to be exposed to some simple astronomy, mathematics, science, and geography, all related to his study in the Scriptures. Ward comments:

The young men who came to the *bet midrash* began by sitting in small groups with one or more teachers...”and after ordination as a scholar, they would gather as disciples, “no longer learning in formal classes but in discussions held while the sage and disciples carried on the duties and responsibilities of daily life together.<sup>11</sup>

This pattern is seen in Jesus’ ministry with his disciples, and reflects our interest in promoting a more organic approach to mentoring. The learners engage in many questions and the mentor passes on knowledge through life lessons.

Girls were educated at home primarily by the mother and certainly learned from their fathers as well, albeit in an informal way. They would experience key lessons in the Hebrew calendar especially around the Passover meal. Understanding the limits that girls had in formal education helps us to interpret some of the New Testament passages that appear to prohibit female participation in leadership. It is also why the learning environment of the house church becomes critical for gender equality as the church grew in the first few centuries.

The Greek method of education was the Hellenistic Gymnasium.<sup>12</sup> There was much more of an emphasis on athletics as well as memorization of classics. Elementary education was left to private teachers, where pages from the classics such as Homer were memorized. At the age of fourteen or fifteen a boy became an *ephebe* (Gk) and

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 22:3.

<sup>11</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*, 159-160.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed description of the Greek Gymnasium and its influence on the early church look at Dutch, *The Educated Elite in 1 Corinthians*, 95-167.

attended a secondary school or gymnasium.<sup>13</sup> Studying Homer in more detail, the student would go beyond to look at other selected Hellenistic works. Higher education could be found in university cities such as Athens, Pergamum, or Alexandria. There the student would learn from great scholars and could study at an expansive library or Museum.<sup>14</sup>

It was rare for Jewish boys to combine Greek and Hebrew learning. The apostle Paul was such a person, able to understand both worlds. Jesus would have attended at least the basic school and perhaps also the *bet talmud*. It was noted by the Temple scholars that at twelve, Jesus had an unusual grasp of Biblical knowledge.<sup>15</sup> We have no record of Jesus attending the highest form of school, the *bet midrash*, for the gospel writers make no mention of it. The Jewish scribes and Pharisees, who would have been proud of their many years of study, were astonished at the understanding of Jesus, and perhaps somewhat jealous of his ability to argue points of law so convincingly. The Jews were amazed at his teaching and asked, "*How did this man get such learning without having studied.*"<sup>16</sup> They challenged his authority, while Jesus was comfortable resting on his own authority.<sup>17</sup> Although there was a formal learning pattern in the first century, Jesus preferred an organic pattern of mentoring, by teaching his disciples in the midst of life and ministry. Jesus mentored whilst traveling around the country and rarely taught in the synagogue.

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<sup>13</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*, 166-167.

<sup>14</sup> Ward, *Jesus and His Times*, 165-168. The Museum was literally the sanctuary of the Muses. Alexandria had a large library.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 2:46-47.

<sup>16</sup> John 7:15 NIV

<sup>17</sup> John 8:12-58; Mark 1:27. It was common at that time for a scribe to quote the authority of his own teacher. Jesus did not do this. He declared that he had his own authority.



## Biblical Mentoring Models

As we look at the biblical record, we see many examples of leaders mentoring others. Moses took a special interest in Joshua. He prepared Joshua for his role as a leader, and commissioned him.<sup>18</sup> Eli mentored Samuel,<sup>19</sup> while David and Jonathan had more of a peer mentoring relationship.<sup>20</sup> David mentored the many warriors around him. The Prophet Nathan held David accountable in a mentoring role.<sup>21</sup> Abigail challenged David to be reminded of his identity.<sup>22</sup> Naomi became a wise sage to Ruth<sup>23</sup>, while Mordecai challenged Esther.<sup>24</sup> Elijah mentored Elisha, with Elisha asking for a double portion of his master's spirit.<sup>25</sup> What we observe in these Old Testament passages is that formal schooling is not employed, but a more informal desire to pass on a legacy to the next generation.

In the New Testament we see the influence that Barnabas had on Paul and then Mark. Barnabas is an excellent example of a person who was able to mentor those who surpassed his own ability. Priscilla and Aquila mentored Apollos, filling in the necessary pieces that were missing in his theological training.<sup>26</sup> We will examine in more detail both Jesus and Paul as mentors. Jesus is unique as a leader and a model for us as he is the Son of God. He was able to discern the hearts of individuals and led a sinless life. The apostle Paul was a flawed human and we can see evidence of his

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<sup>18</sup> Deut 32:44-47; Josh 1:1-9. For a more thorough examination see Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 48-49.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Sam 1:26-28; 3:1-21.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Sam 20.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Sam 12.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Sam 25.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth

<sup>24</sup> Esther 4.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:1-18

<sup>26</sup> Acts 18.

development as we read his letters. It is in their focus on developing leaders organically in the midst of mission that we find similarities.

### **The Apprenticeship Model of Jesus**

Jesus used an apprenticeship model of teaching, following in the footsteps of Moses and Elijah. Like other itinerant rabbis, he did not teach in a static classroom, but chose to move around the country and teach as he went.<sup>27</sup> This is consistent with our thesis of organic ministry. Jesus was going somewhere and he called people to join him. He was doing something and he asked them to partner with him. Jesus had a strategic plan in training twelve disciples, investing completely in his core community and trusting that they would carry the message to the next generation.<sup>28</sup> In this context Jesus invested in those he called and those who chose to align themselves with him. Anderson and Reese comment:

The kind of teaching Jesus provided them was very different from the classroom instruction of the academy today. It assumed a relationship and style that made different demands on both rabbi and disciple, teacher and learner, mentor and protégé. More like the work of a master craftsman tutoring the young apprentice, Jesus' style of instruction embodied a pedagogy that invested life in the learner through an incarnation of the message being taught. This teaching was not something that was conceptually defined for his disciples as much as it was lived, experienced, tasted, and touched by the learners. Jesus not only spent time instructing, training and informing; he spent much time forming a community.<sup>29</sup>

This relational approach was natural and effective. Jesus could go anywhere and find a teaching moment. He would talk with a Samaritan woman and use this to teach the disciples about the spiritual harvest and at the same time model care for outcasts,

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<sup>27</sup> Jesus was not unique in this context. David Bivin comments: "According to Professor Shmuel Safrai of the Hebrew University, an itinerant rabbi was the norm rather than exception. Hundreds and perhaps thousands of such rabbis circulated in the land of Israel in the first century. These rabbis did not hesitate to travel to the smallest of villages or the most remote parts of the country." Bivin, "Travelling Rabbi," no pages. We see the apprenticeship model as an organic picture of mentoring.

<sup>28</sup> See Bruce, *Training of the Twelve* and Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* for a discussion of the strategy that Jesus employed in choosing a few to impact the many.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 16.

Gentiles and women.<sup>30</sup> Jesus fed the five thousand and used the miracle as a moment to teach about true discipleship, even to the point of driving people away.<sup>31</sup> Jesus used parables as a teaching tool and then explained the meaning to his disciples.<sup>32</sup> By using metaphors to communicate spiritual truth, Jesus was giving people word pictures to grasp truth, and also providing easy to remember tools to pass this truth on to others.

The fact that Jesus chose ordinary people as his disciples must not be overlooked. He did not follow the normal rabbinic pattern of selecting academics. Instead he picked fishermen, zealots, and tax collectors. These disciples would not have been qualified to go to the elite academic schools. Their lack of schooling was noted by the religious leaders in Acts 4:13: *“The officials were amazed to see how brave Peter and John were, and they knew that these two apostles were only ordinary men and not well educated. The officials were certain that these men had been with Jesus.”* His disciples were always in the organic school of life, becoming a community of learners.<sup>33</sup>

The basis of Jesus’ mentoring approach was an invitation to follow him, through calling disciples towards a new transformational community.<sup>34</sup> Jesus called them to observe his life and listen to his teachings.<sup>35</sup> They traveled around the country with Jesus and watched him engage in ministry. He called them to follow him and he was going to make them fishers of men.<sup>36</sup> His calls were for the purpose of training and then

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<sup>30</sup> John 4:1-42.

<sup>31</sup> John 6:25-71.

<sup>32</sup> Mark 4:34.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 16.

<sup>34</sup> The Essenes were an example of another transformational community that existed in Jesus’ day. “Essenes, was a term that was used at times to cover a fairly wide range of Jewish sectarian bodies that drew aside from the main stream of Jewish life.” From Douglas, Ed. “Essenes” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 349-350. They were similar to later monastic Christian communities.

<sup>35</sup> John 1:39.

<sup>36</sup> Mark 1:17.

for service. He called them to be with him, to share life.<sup>37</sup> They were going to be sent out to preach and to drive out evil spirits and heal diseases.<sup>38</sup> For three years the disciples watched, listened and learned. Jesus introduced a method of discipling that involved all of life. He was mentoring them in community.

As Jesus was teaching them, this mentoring process did not occur only one-to-one. He had an individual encounter with Nicodemus in John 3 and he reinstates Peter in John 21. Jesus may have focused personally on an issue, but his preferred approach was to have others around him. As Jesus taught someone, or responded to a question, he intentionally wanted those who were around to learn as well. Even when he selected Peter, James and John for greater revelation, it must be noted that he picked the three and not just one.<sup>39</sup> Each one learned from the others. The picture we have here is one of a learning cluster or learning community. In John 14-16, we observe Jesus organically at work as a spiritual mentor for his own disciples.<sup>40</sup>

### **Paul's Ministry Teams and Missional Learning**

The apostle Paul mentored many key leaders within the early church. He did not use a formal educational process, but mentored men and women while he engaged in mission. Despite being schooled formally under Gamaliel, he was committed to organic ministry and mentoring, as he developed future pastors and missionaries, all in the midst of mission activity.

The uniqueness of Paul's conversion and spiritual development is an example of organic mentoring. Ordinary believers influenced Paul in his conversion and spiritual

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<sup>37</sup> Mark 3:13-14.

<sup>38</sup> Mark 3:13-14 and Matt 10:1-10.

<sup>39</sup> Mark 9:2-13.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 97.

development, not formal teachers. He had witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7 and then engaged in persecuting the fledgling church. On his way to Damascus he had a profound encounter with Jesus and the two questions he asked became the foundation of his ministry: “Who are you, Lord?” and “What shall I do, Lord?”<sup>41</sup> If Jesus truly was the Son of God, then he demanded Paul’s allegiance and obedience. An ordinary believer in Damascus named Ananias then helped Paul through the first few days of his conversion. Soon after, Barnabas took a personal interest in Paul and became a mentor and a sponsor for the young would be missionary. Mentoring in this context was organic and not formal or institutionalized.

In Acts 13, an organic leadership team in Antioch selected Barnabas and Paul for missionary service. It was the church at Antioch that first began to reach out to the Gentiles and it was Paul who later understood the critical nature of not requiring the Gentiles to follow the Law.<sup>42</sup> With the agreement of the leaders in Jerusalem, the separation of Judaism and Christianity became a surety. From Antioch, Paul was commissioned to take the gospel to the Gentiles.<sup>43</sup>

His strategy for mission was to go along the main Roman trade routes, take advantage of the excellent communications, and focus on key provincial cities.<sup>44</sup> He would go to the Jewish synagogues and win a hearing, preaching that Jesus was the resurrected Messiah. Despite opposition among the Jews, he would gain some converts,

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<sup>41</sup> Acts 22:8-10. These questions are excellent to ask any potential leader, for they deal with issues of identity and service.

<sup>42</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 43 and Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 162 .

<sup>43</sup> See Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 182

<sup>44</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 356-368. Green comments, “Paul...seems to have selected places which were centres of Roman administration, of Greek civilization, of Jewish influence and of commercial importance. See also Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 49-50.

often among the Hellenised Jews or the God-fearers.<sup>45</sup> Paul targeted key people in a community, especially those who were patrons and capable of influence.<sup>46</sup> With these patrons he would set up house churches where the community gathered weekly for prayer, teaching, community meals and encouragement.<sup>47</sup> Before leaving a community he would ensure that leaders were developed and appointed.

Another strategy of Paul's was to recruit his leadership base from the local Hellenistic Jews or those friendly to Judaism. They could more easily understand Jesus and his message. They were also closer to the target audience than their Hebraic Jewish brethren. They could understand the culture. Petersen and Shamy call these people "insiders."<sup>48</sup> By establishing this bridge to the culture, Paul could reach the Gentiles. In time, leaders emerged solely from the Gentile converts who could naturally reach their neighbours. Paul was capable of stretching beyond his Jewish background to reach the Gentiles.<sup>49</sup> He was uniquely equipped to bridge the culture gap.

The apostle Paul did not work alone, but recruited young leaders whom he mentored in the midst of ministry. On the first journey to the Galatian provinces in Asia he worked with Barnabas. On his second journey he recruited Silas and Timothy and focused his efforts in Macedonia and Greece. Whilst in Corinth he established a partnership with Aquila and Priscilla, who were fellow tentmakers.<sup>50</sup> Their home was likely Paul's base for several months, before he took the two of them on his next trip to

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<sup>45</sup> These were people who admired Judaism but were not circumcised and included completely in the community. Cornelius and Lydia are examples of such people. See Glasser, "The Apostle Paul and the Missionary Task," 108.

<sup>46</sup> Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City*, 45-48.

<sup>47</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 75-77.

<sup>48</sup> Petersen and Shamy, *Insiders*, 70-71. Insiders are people who are naturally part of a culture and can see the gospel move through their relational networks. Belongers might be a better term.

<sup>49</sup> See Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 54-58 for a more detailed discussion of the shift from the Hebraic to the Hellenist Jewish focus.

<sup>50</sup> Acts 18:1-18.

Ephesus. They became useful co-workers, capable of correcting the errant theology of a powerful orator named Apollos.<sup>51</sup>

Paul left Aquila and Priscilla and travelled through Galatia and Phrygia to follow up on his previous converts. He then returned to Ephesus where he stayed for several years. On his third missionary journey, Paul was accompanied by several men, including Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus. They represented various communities where Paul had travelled.<sup>52</sup> As we read about Paul's missionary ventures it is obvious that he did not work alone, but always had someone at his side. He selected individuals and trained them as he engaged in mission. Some like Timothy and Titus he eventually put in local church leadership roles. Others, like Aquila and Priscilla, seemed to be able to move about and minister where needed.<sup>53</sup> The lists of people that Paul would regard as co-workers is lengthy, especially those recorded in Romans 16 and at the end of most of his epistles. Each of them would have been mentored in some fashion by Paul as they co-laboured together.

The development of these leaders did not happen in a school. They learned organically alongside Paul. He would give tasks to men such as Timothy and Titus, leaving them responsible for the spiritual formation and leadership development of fledgling churches.<sup>54</sup> He had confidence in people like Aquila and Priscilla, entrusting them with instruction in Ephesus. He taught people naturally in the midst of ministry. He expected them to pass what they knew on to others. Paul said to Timothy, "*You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach*

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<sup>51</sup> Acts 18:24-26.

<sup>52</sup> Acts 20:4

<sup>53</sup> This couple originated in Rome, moved to Corinth, then to Ephesus and ended back in Rome. (Rom 16:3)

<sup>54</sup> Acts 17:14-15.

*these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.*"<sup>55</sup>

Paul describes four generations here: Paul, Timothy, trustworthy people, and others.

Paul modelled an organic leadership pattern of mentoring that included gathering apprentices who were entrusted with the responsibility of communicating the gospel, building communities and developing leadership.

### **Paul's Commitment to Develop Leaders**

We have observed Paul travelling on his missionary endeavours with groups of leaders. The leadership was not developed in a formal way but through organic modeling and mentoring. Paul selected potential leaders, then at the appropriate time they were appointed in leadership roles, as a result of the character qualities that they expressed.

In the New Testament account of the advance of the Gospel two general types of leadership are evident. Paul, Peter and many others were 'apostolic leaders'. Wherever these leaders went with the Gospel they left behind 'local leaders'. Although there is common ground shared by both types of leaders, there are also important differences in the scope and nature of their leadership.... In the New Testament it required both 'apostolic and local' leadership to take the Gospel 'to and into' the nations. They were both independent and interdependent. They needed each other to see the Gospel advance. Their commitment to this end enabled them to work together.<sup>56</sup>

Paul was part of an 'apostolic' team that was focused on spreading the gospel. Once a church was established, then Paul appointed leaders in that local context. What was his purpose in developing these leaders and what did he do?

We have observed that in his organic way, Paul first selected leaders to travel and work with him. Gehring comments, "...Paul continued the practice of partner mission for his own missional outreach, something he had learned earlier in Antioch; as

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<sup>55</sup> 2 Tim 2:2 NLT.

<sup>56</sup> The Navigators, "Labourers and Leaders," 7,27. Paul saw himself as an apostle, 1 Cor 9:1,2.



a traveling missionary he almost always took someone along with him.”<sup>57</sup> We have already made note of the many lists of his co-workers.

When Paul and his apostolic team established a church in a community, he was committed to appointing elders before the team departed.<sup>58</sup> Note what Paul says to the Ephesian elders when he was set to leave:

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*<sup>59</sup>

Paul displayed his concern for the church in Ephesus and he comments on the work he had done in Ephesus. It is obvious that he cared deeply for the leaders and the community that he was leaving. Paul was confident that he had laid a foundation and he knew that others would build upon it.<sup>60</sup> Writing to Titus he said, “*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*”<sup>61</sup> In some cases Paul appointed leaders from his own missionary band to lead the local congregations, as he did with Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus. In most cases leaders were developed organically in their own setting.

The leaders Paul selected were required to have strong biblical character qualities and have a grasp of the Scripture. These qualities are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 and in

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<sup>57</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> Acts 14:23.

<sup>59</sup> Acts 20:28-32 NIV.

<sup>60</sup> I Cor 3:10,11.

<sup>61</sup> Titus 1:5.

Titus 1:5-9. They had to have integrity and show it in the leadership of their own families. They needed to be generous and hospitable, demonstrating love. They needed to have sound doctrine, demonstrating an understanding of the faith. They needed to have a good reputation in the community and be willing to serve. They were to lead as servant-leaders and not in a show of power and control. As we saw above in Ephesus, Paul spent quality time in the community and his ministry was accompanied with tears. He knew the people who were selected and appointed as leaders. In 1 Thessalonians Paul spends much time affirming his apostolic role in modeling, caring for and working hard in that community. We learn that character is foundational for leadership and must be a necessary component in organic mentoring.

We have learned that despite exposure to more formal learning styles, Jesus and the apostle Paul employed the organic form of apprenticeship in developing future leaders in the church. They used no formal techniques in training leaders but chose to encourage, disciple and equip potential leaders in the context of living life. Both Jesus and Paul recruited potential leaders for mission, and in the midst of their ministry they used circumstances and natural moments to create teaching opportunities. Paul intentionally invited men and women to join with him in mission. He built up a large group of leaders he called co-workers. This foundation of leadership multiplied and built the early church. Paul demonstrated an organic mentoring model and used families, house churches and his own ministry teams as templates for leadership development.

## Chapter Two: The Family of God as a Foundation for Mentoring

In this chapter we will introduce the concept of family as a key aspect of the organic approach to mentoring and ministry. The apostle Paul used the family as his basic template for organic mentoring. The family was the one constant in different cultures.<sup>1</sup> If the gospel could penetrate each family structure, then it would spread naturally along relational lines. We will explore the family structure in the first century and observe how the gospel grew through families. The family also provided the early church with a metaphor of new social relationship: being brothers and sisters. The book of Philemon is instructive here. Family also provides us with the metaphor of being spiritual parents and the implications this has for organic mentoring.

### The Family as a Base of Ministry

Families are important to God and his mission. After the Fall, God chose to redeem humanity through Abraham and his family.<sup>2</sup> This family became the nation of Israel. Out of this family Jesus became the seed of the promise of salvation. Paul argues that the spiritual family that follows Jesus inherits the promise of Abraham.<sup>3</sup> He says, *“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*<sup>4</sup> Paul reminds us that God wants a people, a family for himself when he says, *“I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*<sup>5</sup> God sees the family as important for redemption and for mission. Simson comments, “Every-day life is usually expressed in the family, the basic cell unit of every

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<sup>1</sup> In observing the family of the first century in the Mediterranean we must acknowledge that it was structured differently than families of today. The father had great authority, women were much weaker and slaves had no rights. We will see these differences in this chapter. We must be cautious in making direct applications to our families today. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 301-302.

<sup>2</sup> Gen 12:1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Gal 3:6-14.

<sup>4</sup> Gal 3:29.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor 6:18 quoting 2 Sam 7:14; 7:8.

society and culture. Families are usually very organic, informal, relational and consist of whatever it takes to share lives.”<sup>6</sup> The family becomes an organic means of spreading the gospel.

To understand how the gospel grew in the first century we need to understand the family structure. We will look at the role of men, women, children and slaves in households. Elliot gives us a description:

Ancient households were not only social units of primary family, relatives, hired help, and slaves living together. They were economic units as well. In both rural and urban settings they constituted the basic work force in the economic cycle of the production, circulation, and consumption of goods and services. ‘Economy’ in antiquity was predominantly household economy, as the relation of *oikonomia* (‘household management’) to *oikos* (‘house,’ ‘household’) indicates.<sup>7</sup>

Patzia adds that sometimes the home was used for gatherings of social, professional and religious clubs or guilds. The owner probably was the leader of such meetings or at least was considered the benefactor or patron.<sup>8</sup> So a home would have the nuclear family, plus other relatives, slaves, slave families, clients and other work mates, and the head of the household would expect obedience from all.<sup>9</sup> The apostle Paul strategically targeted the head of each household or *paterfamilias* (Lat). If the gospel could take root with him, then it would spread throughout the household.

The household in Roman society reflected the patriarchal nature of the culture. The *paterfamilias* was the unquestioned head and authority of the house. He was focused more outside the home on business or political affairs, and had authority over

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<sup>6</sup> Simson, *Houses*, 19. Paul makes a rich use of family terminology, see Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 162-163.

<sup>7</sup> Elliot, “*Philemon and House Churches*,” 145, 146. “The Greek word ‘OIKOS’, commonly translated as ‘household,’ is used eighty-seven times by Luke in his two books.” Ayer, “Household Evangelism,” line 16, 17. For an examination of the research in households and house churches see Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 1-27.

<sup>8</sup> Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church*, 189.

<sup>9</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christian*, 30. Also Wolf, “Oikos evangelism.”

his wife, children, slaves and other freedmen who might work for him.<sup>10</sup> The wife was expected to run the affairs inside the home. As he travelled she was delegated with more authority. She would have ensured that children were educated and that male and female slaves were kept in their place, sometimes with specific cruelty.<sup>11</sup>

Women at that time had various degrees of freedom within different cultures, although they were all subservient to men. In Athens the women had little authority. Jewish women were slightly better off than in many neighbouring cultures but they were not entitled to have institutional or religious authority. In Roman culture, women could not vote or hold public office, but they could own land and often had significant influence behind the scenes. In Asia Minor some women were permitted to hold public office.<sup>12</sup>

Despite growing freedom in the first century, there was certainly sexual discrimination in most cultures. Men had absolute authority and in practice were allowed more sexual freedom. Men had wives for procreation but often would have mistresses or use their female slaves for sexual purposes.<sup>13</sup> The women did not have the same freedoms and were held to a higher standard. In Roman society females faced the double threat of infanticide (or abandonment at birth), and great risk of childbirth later.<sup>14</sup> As such there were many more men in the Roman Empire than women. Girls were often

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<sup>10</sup> See Meeks, *The First Urban Christian*, 75 for further discussion on the household. Malherbe says that the household was the basic political unit. Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 69

<sup>11</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 144-157.

<sup>12</sup> Witherington, *Women*, 17, 26

<sup>13</sup> "Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our person, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households." Witherington, *Women*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 118. See his entire chapter on the role of women 95-118. also Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 51. The Christian community immediately set itself apart from the culture in rescuing abandoned babies. Widows would have a ministry to these orphans as reflected in the New Testament- an appeal to the church to minister to widows and orphans, see further on 77.

married as early as 12 years old to men much older.<sup>15</sup> Women and especially girls were vulnerable in that culture.

Children had few rights. Scholars estimate that fifty percent of all children died before age ten.<sup>16</sup> Boys were preferred over girls. They were both educated at home but boys had opportunities for higher learning. Children in a household might play with slave children at an early age. The words of Jesus (Luke 22:26), in elevating children to be the standard of Kingdom entrance, were completely counter-cultural.<sup>17</sup>

Slavery was common, although some slaves could purchase their freedom.<sup>18</sup> A household would have several slaves depending on the wealth of the *paterfamilias*. Slaves had very few rights, for they were slaves first and humans second. They could be beaten at will, and executed if captured after escape. Slave families would have been split up and women slaves were desirable if they could rear more slaves. As all slaves were considered merely as property, female slaves were particularly vulnerable. They were used by masters for sexual pleasure and had no recourse should they receive abusive treatment.<sup>19</sup> The female slave might nurse the children of the household and was

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<sup>15</sup> Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 62. See also Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 95-128. Stark gives detailed statistics to support the role of women in Christian growth.

<sup>16</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 78. As such the theme of death and the tragedy of losing someone so young is portrayed regularly in the New Testament as Jesus is confronted with anxious and grieving parents.

<sup>17</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 83.

<sup>18</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christian*, 20-22. When discussing slavery in the New Testament we must distance ourselves from this practice. Although slavery was a common practice in the first century, we now know that it is based on oppression, violence and a violation of the Christian value that sees all people made in God's image. Modern Christian theology recognizes the abuses of slavery, and we know that any treatment of other humans as slaves is not part of God's Kingdom values. A modern application of the slavery passages would lead us to examine our working relationships as employers and workers, or in any relationship where power and control can be used to manipulate or oppress fellow humans. Kingdom values and relationships take priority over social structures and customs.

<sup>19</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 103. So for the Christian female slave she could easily have been subjected to the conflict between obedience to a master or her desire to be faithful to the sexual commandments in Scripture. As well Christian slave owners may not have seen the error of abusing their female slaves as we have evidence of Christian slave owners into the 5<sup>th</sup> Century. See Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 115-117 for more on this discussion.

known as *mamma* (Lat).<sup>20</sup> A female slave would have felt most powerless and so would eagerly embrace the apparent freedom offered by the gospel.

In Roman society much power resided in the role of patron. One would measure one's status by being the patron of others. The patron would provide financial resources, political favours and business opportunities in return for loyalty and political support. A *paterfamilias* would function as a patron to workers who might support his business. There were patrons of hospitals or patrons of artistic ventures. Women also functioned as patrons, especially if they were widows and owned significant property. Phoebe in Romans 16:2 is referred to as a patron of Paul. In the same way, Lydia functioned as a patron to Paul and the early church in Philippi (Acts 16).<sup>21</sup>

By understanding the different gender and social roles we can better understand organic leadership within households and houses churches.<sup>22</sup> The new faith would move throughout the network of relationships and throughout the extended family. Wolf comments:

By thus cleaning the lenses of our socio-historical spectacles, we can see what an *oikos* meant to the early church. An *oikos* was the fundamental and natural unit of society, and consisted of one's sphere of influence- his family, friends, and associates. And equally important, the early church spread through oikoses- circles of influence and association.<sup>23</sup>

This is the basis of our thesis. Mentoring would happen in a natural way within the family structure. However, in households where everyone became Christians there were potential social problems, primarily in the relationship between masters and slaves and

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<sup>20</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 100.

<sup>21</sup> "Church leaders often emerged from those who were among the first converts and who, because of their financial means and social status, could act as patrons to the fledgling church (1 Cor 16:15-16), Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 86. See also Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, Chapter 9 and Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 52-53.

<sup>22</sup> We will examine Paul's use of the house church as a base of ministry in the next chapter.

<sup>23</sup> Wolf, "Oikos Evangelism," line 82-85.

with husbands and wives.<sup>24</sup> Women would have been instrumental in the house church in the church functions of worship, hospitality, patronage, education, communication, social services, evangelisation, and mission.<sup>25</sup> What we have is a convergence of household and relational structures; the egalitarian structures were emerging within patriarchal household structures.<sup>26</sup> This new identity of believers, that they were brothers and sisters on equal footing, involved a modification of these household structures. Our understanding of the social roles in the family helps us to see how a new organic form of leadership could emerge in the early church.

### **Brothers and Sisters**

By examining the relationship with one another as brothers and sisters, we will be able to understand how organic mentoring should occur within the family of God- the church. Despite the social challenges noted above, families and the house church became a teaching base and model for the growth of the gospel. Family became theologically significant, as Elliot argues:

...the experiences and sentiments associated with house, home and family provided the early Christians with the familial terminology of their religious language and theological metaphors: God the Father, Jesus the Son, conversion as rebirth, instruction as nourishment, believers as brothers and sisters, and Christian community as spiritual household or family of God, with mutual love and household service as its hallmarks.<sup>27</sup>

Jesus had first introduced the idea of the spiritual family taking precedence over physical families in Mark 3:31-35. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that they were all brothers

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<sup>24</sup> Moxnes, "What is Family," 37. Barclay adds, "The Christian message embraced individuals, who were bound together, to be sure in a new metaphorical family as brothers and sister in Christ, but did not necessarily live, and were not required to live, within the solidarity of a 'Christian family.'" Barclay, "Family as Bearer of Religion," 73. Fitzmeyer adds, "Thus the house-church was a distinctively early Christian cultic creation." Fitzmeyer, *Philemon*, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 12. See also further Chapter 6.

<sup>26</sup> Sandnes, "Equality within Patriarchal Structures," 151, 162 also Witherington, *Women*, 154.

<sup>27</sup> Elliott, "*Philemon and House Churches*," 150. See also Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 153.



and sisters. They were part of a new spiritual family and their relationship with each other was stronger than even their physical families.<sup>28</sup> Moxnes comments: “But the most prominent use of ‘brother’ in the New Testament is as metaphor, or a fictive kinship term, especially used in addressing a Christian community or addressing the members concerning their relationship to one another.”<sup>29</sup> By implication then, there was an elimination of religious hierarchy and an equality that is found in a healthy family. Jesus treated each disciple with respect and modeled servant leadership. He reminded them that their love for each other as kin would be the greatest mark of discipleship.<sup>30</sup>

From the beginning, Jesus referred to his Father in an organic way, as “*Abba*.” This term of familiarity emphasized the rich personal relationship. He encouraged his followers to develop this same kind of kinship relationship. John comments: “*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*”<sup>31</sup> John continues this theme in his epistle when he reminds us that those who believe in Jesus are born of God and therefore are children of God.<sup>32</sup> This speaks to our identity and forms the basis for our relationship as equal children of God.

The apostle Paul continued this emphasis on kinship relationships. When addressing the community of believers he referred to them as “brothers and sisters.”<sup>33</sup> This is a common theme in all his letters. Paul saw this new family relationship as being a metaphor for the new church. He too, saw an equality emerge in this family of God:

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<sup>28</sup> See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 47 for a discussion of the family of God- *familia Dei*.

<sup>29</sup> Moxnes, “What is Family,” 35. This discussion of brother and sister leads to an awkwardness in following certain texts. When referring to brothers, Paul generally included the women as well, unless the text specified gender exclusivity (1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19). Only 1 Tim 5:2 refers to sisters specifically. Modern translations try to eliminate the gender exclusivity by referring to brothers and sisters, see NLT.

<sup>30</sup> John 13:34,35.

<sup>31</sup> John 1:12 RSV.

<sup>32</sup> 1 John 5:11.

<sup>33</sup> Gal 1:2 NLT.

*All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes. Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman. So if you belong to Christ, you are now part of Abraham's family, and you will be given what God has promised.*<sup>34</sup>

The family of God was to work together for the advancement of the gospel and eliminate the social and cultural barriers that would bring disunity.

Other New Testament writers make rich use of the theme of brotherhood and sisterhood as well. The writer of Hebrews comments on holy brothers and sisters, reminds us that God disciplines the children whom he loves, and encourages us to keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters.<sup>35</sup> James has many references to brothers and sisters, often including the word 'dear' at the beginning.<sup>36</sup> Peter refers to brothers and sisters and dear friends, with a preference for the latter.<sup>37</sup> In John's epistles he also gives us rich organic terms of relationship, with references to dear children, brothers and sisters and dear friends.<sup>38</sup> There can be no doubt that the early church saw that they had a familial relationship to each other. They saw themselves as children of God and part of God's family.

One implication of this is the priority of the sibling relationship over other social relationships. This is seen in the family codes in Ephesians. Husbands and wives are first of all spiritual brothers and sisters, with a certain equality built into the relationship, especially in the need to submit to each other.<sup>39</sup> Parents and children are to remember that they are spiritual brothers and sisters also. Children are to obey their parents while

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<sup>34</sup> Gal 3:26-29 CEV

<sup>35</sup> Heb 3:11; Heb 12:4-13; Heb 13:1. NLT

<sup>36</sup> Jam 1:2,9,16,19; 2:1,5,14; 4:11; 5:7,10,12.NLT

<sup>37</sup> 1 Pet 1:22; 4:12; 5:9,12; 2 Pet 2:10; 3:1,8,14,17.NLT

<sup>38</sup> 1 John 2:1, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 28; 3:2, 7, 11, 17, 18, 21; 4:1, 4, 7, 11, 19-21; 5:1, 16; 2 John 13 (sister); 3 John 2, 3, 4. NLT

<sup>39</sup> Eph 5:21.

parents are not to oppress their children. Mutual respect is the dominant theme here. Then to conclude this household code of respect, Paul addresses the relationship between masters and slaves. Slaves are to obey masters, not out of fear but in serving Jesus as the ultimate Master. Masters are to treat slaves with respect, knowing that they also are accountable to Jesus as Master. The organic leadership structure is bounded within the priority of the family relationship. In summary, we should not be treating our close relationships in any way that would violate our primary relationship as brother and sister. This latter relationship is powerfully demonstrated in Paul's letter to Philemon.

What we know is that Philemon was the head of a house church in Colossae, which we gather from the book of Philemon as well as Colossians. Paul writes to Philemon in a gentle but firm tone. He praises Philemon's character and then makes a request. It is commonly assumed that Onesimus had been Philemon's slave and a runaway. After meeting Paul in Rome he is converted and encouraged by Paul to return to his master Philemon.<sup>40</sup> This letter from Paul reveals a conflict between a social structure and the priority of the spiritual sibling relationship in the early church.

A slave had very few rights during that time. A master could have a slave punished severely and in fact the death penalty was warranted if a slave ran away. Regardless of which theory one chooses to accept, Onesimus as a slave was in a position of weakness and Philemon had absolute power. Paul wanted to do the right thing and return the slave to his master. He could order Philemon to accept his slave back or to

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<sup>40</sup> This information is read into the text, as we do not know for certain that Onesimus ran away. Some have argued that Philemon may have sent his slave to Paul for assistance on issues the church was facing. A more moderate view is that Onesimus may have had a conflict with his master and wanted to go to Rome to have Paul mediate and bring reconciliation. It is not within our scope to go into these various arguments. For these various arguments see Fitzmeyer, *Philemon*. John Knox and more recently Sara Winter have argued against the runaway slave theory and in fact believe the letter was written to Archippus a church leader mentioned in the second verse. (Winter, "The Letter to Philemon," 203-212) We do not find their arguments convincing and prefer the traditional interpretation.

free him, but he chooses not to do so. What would the new relationship of Onesimus and Philemon as brothers do to the authority structure in the home? How would other slaves respond? Philemon is caught. Sandnes argues: “Philemon’s position as the master of the household is accepted, but he is supposed to act according to the brotherhood-nature of the Christian fellowship.”<sup>41</sup>

As the gospel spread it did have an impact on society. Paul is well aware that Philemon had a responsibility to preserve the social order. But he also knew that a new relational order was dawning, where believers would consider themselves siblings in Christ ahead of the structures in society.

Within the context of households an egalitarian brother- and sisterhood is in the making. The new identity of the believers, i.e. that they were brothers and sisters on equal footing, involved, however, a modification of household structures. Paul’s letter to Philemon is an example of this. Paul insists that the master and slave have become siblings. This siblingship is theologically or eschatologically based. He also insists that this new relationship should have some practical consequences.<sup>42</sup>

If Philemon accepted Onesimus back unpunished then there might have been instability in the household. Paul actually presented a solution by asking that Philemon free Onesimus and send him back for service in the gospel. This ensured that the gospel values were upheld, while at the same time avoiding potential social unrest in having Onesimus around the household. Elliot adds, “The Onesimus affair was not simply a matter for Philemon alone to decide according to his legal right as head of the household, but an issue involving the life and moral standards of a Christian

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<sup>41</sup> Sandnes, “Equality within Patriarchal Structures,” 158. Also note that Paul refers to Onesimus as his son. It is likely that Paul was instrumental in Onesimus becoming a Christian. This more powerfully placed Onesimus and Philemon in position as brothers. Also note again our previous discussion about how to interpret slavery passages with a correct hermeneutic: we are in no way condoning slavery when we explore the impact that the fictive kinship relationship had on this unchristian social practice.

<sup>42</sup> Sandnes, “Equality within Patriarchal Structures,” 162.

community.”<sup>43</sup> It is interesting that Paul writes quite clearly in the companion letter to the Colossians about how slaves should serve their masters as if serving Christ.<sup>44</sup> Paul seems to want Philemon to be gracious, but he is still sensitive to the fact that slaves could be taking advantage of their masters. The point we take from this passage is that the relationship of Paul, Philemon and Onesimus was primarily as brothers in Christ, and this affected their social status within the house church. Their wrestling over these delicate issues is an example of organic mentoring among spiritual peers.

### **Becoming Spiritual Parents**

The apostle Paul also refers in Philemon to another spiritual relationship: He regarded Onesimus as his son. Here, we will examine the idea of spiritual parenting and how it relates to organic mentoring. The scriptures describe spiritual growth in organic ways: we are to long for the milk of the Word like babies, (1 Peter 2:2) but we must move beyond milk to solid food (Hebrews 5:12-14). There is a definite image of spiritual growth from infancy, through childhood to maturity. However, this image of spiritual parenting must be handled delicately and not taken to extremes, as it affects the stronger image we have of an egalitarian kinship relationship.

The apostle Paul describes spiritual parenting in 1 Thessalonians. He says to them: “*You became imitators of us and of the Lord...*”<sup>45</sup> and later reminds them of his parental love for them: “*...but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become dear to us.*”<sup>46</sup> Paul

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<sup>43</sup> Elliot, “*Philemon and House Churches*,” 147.

<sup>44</sup> Col 3:22-25

<sup>45</sup> 1 Thes 1:6.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Thes 2:7,8.NIV

cared deeply for the believers in Thessalonica. He refused to use his formal apostolic leadership role in an authoritarian way (verse 6) but chose rather to bring in a loving parenting relationship as his model. Paul continues this theme referring to his role as spiritual father: “*For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*”<sup>47</sup> This pattern of parental love and organic mentoring is strongly reflected in Paul’s writings. His mentoring did not follow the formal rabbinic style but instead was modeled on spiritual parenting.

Organic leadership in the church begins when we understand our “role as a parenting influence- as a holistic life-growth community.”<sup>48</sup> Those that are more mature have a responsibility to assist those new to the faith in their spiritual growth. Kreider argues that spiritual parents are to be models in the way that Jesus was a model of servant leadership. Mothers provide a sense of nurture, acceptance and safety. Fathers give their children a sense of significance, and see their potential. They give what they have to their children, passing on what is necessary to grow to maturity.<sup>49</sup>

Maturity should lead to multiplication. Just as it is normal for parents to have children, so too should spiritual parents see spiritual children grow to maturity and multiply.<sup>50</sup> Kreider comments:

Their goal is for their children to reach their full potential as men and women of God. In a spiritual parenting relationship, all of this takes place in an atmosphere of patient love and acceptance, without judgment or fear of gossip. It is meant to

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<sup>47</sup> 1 Thes 2:11,12 NIV.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Stearns, “Prepare the Way” quoted in Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 38-42.

<sup>50</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 103-104. This is also a major theme of the Navigator ministry. First communicated by Dawson Trotman, in *Born to Reproduce*. Talk given in 1956; recorded for Canadian Navigator Conference, 2002 on CD. Also printed in a booklet- Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992.

happen naturally and easily by example, and modeled behaviour as spiritual parents impart a blessing to their spiritual children.<sup>51</sup>

The cycle of initiating a relationship, building into a person's life, and then releasing him or her to service follows the organic pattern we see in healthy families.

Mentoring should look for opportunities for talking about reality in the midst of just living life. More is caught than taught. Kreider comments: "Hang out together, golf together, shop together, eat together, bake together, weed the garden together, attend a sporting event together- as you spend time together, life issues will surface to discuss and learn from as we aim for Christ-likeness."<sup>52</sup> Simson reminds us that the home is the most difficult and meaningful place for people to be spiritual, "where everything they do and say is automatically put through a spiritual litmus test against reality, where hypocrisy can be effectively weeded out and authenticity can grow."<sup>53</sup> Kreider adds:

Real family knows each other inside out. They see the good, the bad, and the ugly, and they still love each other and work as a unit to encourage each member. We can be ourselves in a family. There is no test to pass; we are included simply because we are family. In a spiritual family the struggles and realities are readily shared in transparent relationships- a small group interaction- with spiritual parents to guide us.<sup>54</sup>

Organic mentoring should occur within a church community where those older in the faith naturally assist those new to Christ in spiritual growth.

However, we must put out a caution here. Our parent- child relationship is with God. He is our spiritual father and he holds the ultimate authority. God delegates any authority we might have as leaders, and we must see ourselves as servant leaders.<sup>55</sup> We

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<sup>51</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 107.

<sup>53</sup> Simson, *Houses*, xxiv.

<sup>54</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 20.

<sup>55</sup> A parallel image is seen in 1 Pet 5:2-4, where servant leaders are described as shepherds (v.2), but are under the authority of Jesus who is the Chief Shepherd (v.4). We may serve God as shepherds but must

are all equal brothers and sisters in the family of God. Our role as spiritual parents must be held very lightly. Seeing ourselves as midwives in the birthing process might help: we come alongside and assist the family but we don't have a sense of authority over the baby. Seeing ourselves as guardians of growing children will ensure that we always look to God as the parent. Seeing ourselves as peers, mutually encouraging each other in peer mentoring, will ensure that a hierarchical structure is avoided. Kreider's comments can be taken too far and certain controlling abuses can occur between spiritual parent and new believer.<sup>56</sup> The relationship is best handled carefully, in the context of a strong community. God is our Father and not another person.

We have seen that organic mentoring is a natural process that follows the patterns of family life and parenting models. Effective mentoring begins in the family, with parents equipping their children for life. The family was the focus of the early church and became the foundation of its growth. "The basic structure of the family has proven itself to be the incubator and nucleus of the mission church."<sup>57</sup> Mentoring is based on our equality as spiritual siblings, with a place for spiritual parenting in giving guidance and encouragement. The family is structured around the home and it is the study of the household or *oikos* that also gives us valuable lessons on organic ministry.

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remember that we are equal to one another as sheep. This is similar in nature to our spiritual parenting role and our identity as brothers and sisters.

<sup>56</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 147. Kreider comments on the abuses found in the discipleship movement of the 1970's as does Vincent in Don E. Vinzant, *Roots of the Modern Discipling Movement*. Available from <http://www.somis.org/TDD-08.html> (accessed 4 February, 2006), 129

<sup>57</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 301.



### **Chapter Three: The Role of House Churches in the Mentoring Process**

In this chapter, we will explore the house churches in the early church. The house church in the New Testament is a revealing study of the cornerstone of church growth. As the Apostle Paul and other early leaders preached the good news, they found in homes a welcome place to preach and find rest from travel. Gehring comments, “Because of the small size of house churches it was possible to maintain a family-like atmosphere and practice brotherly love in a very personal and concrete way.” Regarding mentoring he adds, “...the house church would have served as a kind of training ground for future leaders of the early church even in the earliest days in Jerusalem.”<sup>1</sup> This captures our thesis of organic leadership within the house church. The family structure created some challenges, which we see in the book of Philemon, but it also gave theological lessons to pass on to the growing church. We see the emergence of organic ministry embedded in the texts, and how the house church was used as a base for mission. Households became the locus of the church and it is in these homes that leaders were developed. We will understand how men and women are meant to work together in ministry. We will describe the communal practices found in these house churches and how they can be applied today.

#### **The Role of the House Church in Mission**

Today when we talk about church, we can so easily think of a building. But in the New Testament the term for church, *ekklesia*, (Gk) refers to the gathering or assembling of believers and is never used to describe the building.<sup>2</sup> “Not until the third century do we have evidence of special buildings being constructed for Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 117. Gehring adds that a natural leadership structure was already in place in the house church with the householder taking the normal role of leader, 201.

<sup>2</sup> See Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary*, 397-402.

gatherings and, even then, they were modeled on the room for receiving guests in the typical Roman and Greek household.”<sup>3</sup> As we examine the New Testament evidence we see the early church growing through households.

Jesus spent much of his ministry in homes.<sup>4</sup> The infant church gathered in the upper room to pray, worship, study and break bread.<sup>5</sup> God launched a new venue towards the Gentiles through the ministry of Peter and the household of Cornelius in Acts 10:7,24. When the apostle Paul went on his missionary journey to Philippi, he saw both Lydia’s household and the jailer’s household come to faith, and a church community was launched in Lydia’s home.<sup>6</sup> After Paul began his ministry in Corinth some scholars have determined that there were at least seven separate house churches in that city.<sup>7</sup> Stephanas had a house church (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15f) as did Aquila and Priscilla.<sup>8</sup> Aquila and Priscilla probably led a house church in Ephesus and in Rome.<sup>9</sup> We know of the household of Onesiphorus in Ephesus<sup>10</sup> and specifically of churches that met in the household of Philemon of Colossae<sup>11</sup> and Nympha of Laodicea.<sup>12</sup> Titius Justus acted as host (Acts 18:7) and we learn of the conversion of the “whole household” of Crispus (Acts 18:8).<sup>13</sup> In Corinth they met together occasionally, but in Rome there is

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<sup>3</sup> Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, 35. Also quoted in Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 71.

<sup>4</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, chapter two. Gehring argues convincingly that Jesus used Peter’s home in Capernaum as his base for his itinerant preaching ministry.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:42. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 62 -118.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 16:15, 31-34 See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 131-132. Gehring argues for a house church based in the jailer’s household. We know from Acts that at least Lydia hosted a church.

<sup>7</sup> Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church*, 190-192.

<sup>8</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place*, 33. Priscilla and Aquila are an example of the missionary pattern of moving to a city and setting up house. In this way it may explain why Priscilla appears to have had a more dominant role.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 16:9; Rom 16:5.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Tim 1:16, 4:19.

<sup>11</sup> Phlm 1,2.

<sup>12</sup> Col 4:5.

<sup>13</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 76. Tidball, *Social Context*, 84. Tidball uses Filson’s study to strengthen his argument of seeing the whole household come to faith.

no evidence of the church gathering as a whole in one place, and according to Justin this was the case a century later.<sup>14</sup> In this way the church in a city could refer to a house church or the cluster of house churches.

The apostle Paul focused his mission first on the local synagogue. He wanted to gather Jewish listeners to hear the good news about their Messiah. After a series of persecutions and having to leave several locales, Paul shifts not only from the synagogue as a place to preach, but also he begins to see the Gentiles as people needing to hear the gospel. Once he had gathered a few converts he would use the home as a place for ongoing ministry. Paul used the family unit as his strategic base, especially when his initial focus towards the synagogue was thwarted. “It is no surprise to find that the growth of the Christian faith ran on family lines in a family- oriented society.... Conversion of households fixes the character of the Christian fellowship; the embryo of the community was a family and household is turned into a congregation.”<sup>15</sup> Although the gospel did reach many who were poor it is obvious that there were also people of means responding as well.<sup>16</sup> As congregations grew and Paul moved from city to city, the home became even more important.

The mobility of Roman society in the first century was a major factor in the spread of Christianity. It was a unique time in history. For a period of a few hundred years people could travel around the Mediterranean with relative ease, not fearing robbers. The Roman Empire with its excellent road system and the security of its

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<sup>14</sup> Banks, Paul’s Idea of Community, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Sandnes, “Equality within Patriarchal Structures,” 153. Gehring argues that there was a built in leadership structure with the *paterfamilias* already in place in the *oikos*. Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 201-210. Banks identifies four characteristics of Paul’s approach to church: its homelike ethos, its holistic appeal, its participatory style, and its outgoing nature. Banks, *Church Comes Home*, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Filson, *Significance*, 111 and Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 51-53.

military had such advantages. Malherbe points out that the churches were established on the major trade routes. Not only did Paul travel extensively; so too did his associates.<sup>17</sup>

Hospitality then became an important factor. As Malherbe mentions:

Innkeepers were frequently associated with magical practices, and it was commonly assumed that a traveler could obtain ‘commercial’ female companionship in the inns.... Jews, for obvious reasons, avoided the inns, choosing to care for their wandering brethren themselves. Christians appear to have followed their example.<sup>18</sup>

So being hospitable became not just an overflow of Christian love but a practical necessity in the growth of the church. Visiting preachers needed a place to stay. Paul’s associates had to be looked after. This then reinforced the need for homes to be the locus of the new church movement.

The houses of that day would vary from those that were quite basic to elaborate structures. Larger homes would have a central open atrium with the rooms around it. The largest room to one side would be the dining room or *triclinium* (Lat), which would be the likely place for a house church to gather. It would also allow for overflow into the atrium. Most sources agree that the probable capacity for these house churches was 50, with 30-40 more likely.<sup>19</sup> Later in the Second Century another room especially for the community was added to the house. History confirms that there were significant changes in the homes used as churches during the first three centuries C.E. Initially the church met in a home large enough to accommodate a small group of people. In some

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<sup>17</sup> Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 62-64. Perhaps no one traveled as much as a certain Phrygian merchant whose tomb inscription claimed that in the course of his life he had traveled to Rome seventy-two times. Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 66. Also Gehring, *House Churches and Mission*, 293.

<sup>19</sup> Murphy-O’Conner, “*House Churches and the Eucharist*,” 36 and Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*, 35-36. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 134-142. Gehring discusses the various types of house structures including homes like Aquila and Priscilla’s in Corinth that would have been a rented workshop home. There has been some discussion about lower class tenement homes in Rome, but Gehring dismisses these arguments as speculative, see 144-151.

cases, according to the financial resources of the patron, a certain room may have been set aside and even redecorated to make it more appealing and comfortable. Brad Blue proposes that such renovations belong to a second stage of development (150-250 C.E.), and in this case, homes were identified as the *domus ecclesia*. (Gk) A third stage, (250-313 C.E.) “saw the introduction of larger buildings and halls (both private and public) before the introduction of basilical architecture by Constantine.”<sup>20</sup>

On the role of the *paterfamilias*, Gehring comments: “For the congregation that met in a house, a leadership structure was already in place from the very beginning, built into the social infrastructure of the ancient *oikos* in advance.”<sup>21</sup> It was quite natural for the householder to gravitate towards the leadership role, especially when itinerant leaders were absent. In commenting on why Paul does not mention installing leaders in house churches, Gehring says,

This could be related to the fact that it was not necessary because leadership structures were already built in to the ancient *oikos* and hence leaders emerged from below, from the household setting itself. “We are, therefore, led to suspect that the social forces of the time and culture did in fact provide for their [the house church leaders’] emergence. The group that comes to mind as the one that could easily emerge in this manner with these responsibilities are the heads of households, men and women of means with the ability to manage the affairs of the church.”<sup>22</sup>

This demonstrates our thesis of an organic, house church model of leadership that would influence the mentoring practices at that time.

Although there is no doubt that the male held the dominant position in the Mediterranean society, some women like Lydia, Cloe and Nympha hosted a house church:

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<sup>20</sup> Patzia, *The Emergence of the Church*, 194. The Church of Saint Clement of Rome is believed to be built over top of Clement’s actual home.

<sup>21</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 201. Gehring argues for the householder to be the natural leader.

<sup>22</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 227. Here Gehring is quoting Branick, *House Church*, 91.

There were women who headed households, who ran businesses and had independent wealth, who traveled with their own slaves and helpers.... Both in terms of their position in the larger society and in terms of their participation in the Christian communities, then a number of women broke through the normal expectations of female roles.<sup>23</sup>

With the head of the household in that culture holding absolute power and having, in most situations, women, children and slaves in a subservient posture, the overlay of the new church in the home, with its more freeing atmosphere created some social problems. This is the social dynamic we have referred to in the book of Philemon.

These kinds of social problems are reflected in other areas of scripture as well. Gerd Thiessen has argued that the church in Corinth was characterized by an inner social stratification that was responsible for much of the tension in its communal life.<sup>24</sup> Meeks adds: "It may well be the case that the incipient factions addressed by Paul in 1 Cor 1-4 were based on different households."<sup>25</sup> In fact Osiek and Balch summarizes the argument:

Use of family as model for the church had both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, it provided an open house atmosphere in which appropriate human relationships could be learned, and in which opportunity for mission could proceed along recognized channels. On the negative side, the Greek house was built to segregate by gender, the Roman house by status. The richer the house, the more possibility for segregation according to status. Discrimination was therefore built into the basic model, in spite of Christian baptismal ethics. A social problem expressed in architecture became an ethical problem, to the disadvantage of women, slaves, and social inferiors. Though these dynamics worked slightly differently depending on the degree of Greek, Jewish, or Roman cultural influence in a given situation, the overall effect was to reinforce the social limits and inequality of society, now in the name of God and Christ.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 71. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 210-225.

<sup>24</sup> Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 71.

<sup>25</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 221. See also Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 288-311.

Did the early church reinforce inequality? This could be debated, for it seems that those in a weaker position were freed somewhat for the first time. The door was open for new kinds of relationships, all in submission to Christ. In fact, the early church probably laid the foundation for social change. However social change had powerful forces working against it. The *paterfamilias* still held immense power; and as he was converted, his household was expected to follow.<sup>27</sup> As the church became institutionalized after Constantine, women saw their new freedoms disappear. The seeds for social change were sown but the fruit of that change was not realized for many centuries.

We have seen how the family and the household structure were critical to the formation of the fledgling church in the first century. The home gave the church a safe place to build new believers, train future leaders, house visiting guests and teachers, and launch missionary endeavours. Simson would strongly argue that the institutionalizing of the church after Constantine shifted the church from organism to organization, with a hierarchical, power based structure, and with organic Christian fellowship being forced to adjust to the bigger structure of the church building.<sup>28</sup> In a society today that can be suspicious of organizational structures and traditional church systems, the home can again be a valuable asset in the advancement of the gospel.

### **Men and Women Leading in Community**

The house church provided a place for men and women to minister together as equals. In the book of Philemon, we have an example of leadership resolving conflict over kinship and patriarchal structures. Apphia is included with Philemon and

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<sup>27</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 129.

<sup>28</sup> Simson, *Houses*, 26. We were unable to find concrete evidence of house churches after Constantine, which makes it difficult to compare the house churches of the first century with those of the fourth or beyond.

Archippus as the house church leaders in Philemon's home. It is clear that men and women functioned in various forms of leadership within these house churches and in the case of Nympha of Laodicia the church met in her house. (Col 4:15) She alone defines this church. Was this as leader or as host? Both are leadership functions. In 1 Corinthians 1:11 another group of believers is defined around Chloe and her household. We do not know if these were women completely independent of husbands, as household owners or widows, or if these women were believers with non-believing husbands. The fact that there is no mention of any male in describing these house churches, leads one to consider the former.

The story of Lydia in Acts 16 is particularly illustrative. Paul is looking for a synagogue with the required ten men, but instead finds a group of women praying by the river. Lydia is identified as an independent businesswoman and a worshipper of God. Her belief and baptism parallels the story of Cornelius who was also a God-fearer. She offers hospitality and a form of patronage to Paul and his companions, which Paul accepts. We know from Acts 16:40 that the fledgling church in Philippi was centred in her household and not that of the male jailer who was also converted. Lydia figured prominently in that church.<sup>29</sup>

Outside of the house church, women exercised leadership. In Romans 16:1-2 Phoebe is described as a deacon to the church in Cenchrea. Most translations render the word servant when this word is always translated deacon or minister when it refers to men. Paul could have used the word *duolos* (Gk) if he wanted to emphasize serving. It is also obvious that she was a patron where the word *prostatis* (Gk) is poorly translated

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<sup>29</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 158. See also R. Ryan "Lydia: A Dealer in Purple Goods" *The Bible Today* 22 (5, 1984), 285-289; Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 131-132.



“a great help”. This severely softens Phoebe’s role as a leader and patron to Paul. This was probably not a formal office but it was a position of influence.<sup>30</sup>

Women figure prominently in Romans 16 as co-workers with him in the ministry. Priscilla was one of them. She worked with her husband Aquila, and significantly her name is listed before his most of the time. She was involved teaching a more correct doctrine to the talented Apollos in Acts 18:26. She had risked her life to work with Paul. She was a fellow teacher, evangelist, and house church leader and fulfilled an apostolic function in the early church to the Gentiles.

In the same passage we read about Junia who was considered outstanding among the apostles (vs.7). It is unclear whether Junia should read “Junias,” but the latter was never seen as a masculine name. Church fathers were clear in affirming Junia as an apostle and probably meant by that term the apostolic function of missionary activity. This does not take away from the fact that Paul counted women as valued co-workers and leaders.<sup>31</sup> Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi were referred to in the same way. In summary when looking at leadership functions women played an equal role with men, especially in house churches where the woman alone often defined the church.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond the function of leadership there is further evidence of women holding offices of leadership, especially in early church writings. Ute Eisen has catalogued sources for women prophets, theological teachers, presbyters, widows, deacons and

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<sup>30</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 89. See also Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place*, Chapter Nine. They argue that women were quite involved in the patronage system, much like men. Paul used patronage to develop a network of influence in establishing the young church. His appeal to Phoebe as a patron was to have her help him raise money for his ministry to Spain. Wijngaards has a comment from Origen (c.184-254) on Phoebe as a deacon. Wijngaards, *No Women in Holy Orders?*, 15; also Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 13-15; Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 210-225.

<sup>31</sup> Witherington, *Women*, 188.

<sup>32</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 90. One commentator believes that 5/6 of all house churches mentioned in the NT had women leadership. Witherington sees Paul giving women full membership of the Christian community, Witherington, *Women*, 162.

bishops.<sup>33</sup> We remain unconvinced about women as priests and bishops, but we have overwhelming evidence of women deacons throughout the church, especially in the East.

The church grew at about forty percent per decade according to Rodney Stark.<sup>34</sup> The growth would have initially appeared very slow. By 350 C.E. the church growth at that rate would have suddenly mushroomed to 33 million out of a population of 60 million in the Empire. The house churches were already being replaced by the year 250 with homes being remodelled to accept greater numbers.<sup>35</sup> “By the third century, the household was no longer the heart and centre of Christian activity in the way it was in the earlier years.”<sup>36</sup> With the sudden increase in the fourth century more institutional structures needed to be developed. It was natural to follow more political and hierarchal structures.

Constantine redesigned the ecclesiastical structure to mirror his political structure with a very clear hierarchy of deacons, priests, bishops, and archbishops. The formalization of this structure in the fourth century meant that women officeholders began to decline. It was also at this time that a clergy/laity distinction came into being. Only clergy could appoint bishops and only bishops could ordain priests.<sup>37</sup> The bishop became the sole patron.<sup>38</sup> The Eucharist moved from a community celebration of

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<sup>33</sup> Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 95. See also Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women and Wijngaards, No Women in Holy Orders?*

<sup>34</sup> Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 8. History confirms that there were significant changes in the homes used as churches during the first three centuries A.D. See comments made earlier.

<sup>36</sup> Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 214)

<sup>37</sup> Howe, *Women & Church Leadership*, 94. Ignatius tried to exert control in his community such that only a bishop could perform the Eucharist, exerting a form of authority outside the household. “This does not mean that Episcopal structure was normative by his day, but that the practise was there at least in his church in Antioch, from where he tried to spread central organization as the answer to the confusion of theological heterodoxy.” Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 210-211; 221. See also Witherington, *Women*, 182.

<sup>38</sup> Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman's Place*, 213. The network of patronage was broken, 219.

remembrance to resemble the Jewish pattern of sacrifice and ritual purity, with the priest fully representing Christ to the body. With this emphasis women became excluded.<sup>39</sup>

Canons at Synods gave greater definition to the role of women leaders but also began to institute more restrictions.<sup>40</sup> Beyond the role of the women as leaders within the house church, women were continuing to provide leadership until the Middle Ages, especially in the monastic movement.<sup>41</sup> By then women leaders were marginalized.

Women leaders were part of an innovative church. Function was stressed over office or structure, while innovation was stressed over stability.<sup>42</sup> As the church lost its zeal to grow in new ways and as the church became increasingly more accepted, the emphasis of church leaders was to bring stability and develop leadership structure. It is worthwhile to look at organic movements of the church since the early years, and observe that each time the church needed new life and expansion women leaders emerged. Once the ground was stabilized the male leadership was again emphasized.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Howe, *Women & Church Leadership*, 102, 133. This argument is still put forward by Roman Catholics. The priest needs to be male because Jesus was male.

<sup>40</sup> Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 121, 127. The Canon 11 of the Synod of Laodicea. See also Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 40 and Madigan and Osiek, *Ordained Women*, 118, 122. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE set the minimum age as 40 for a deaconess. This proves that women did hold offices in the first three hundred years of the church. In fact, women holding offices did not disappear from the church in the West until 600 C.E. and in the East until 800 C.E.

<sup>41</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church* 41. Women flocked to monasteries for learning in a safe environment and it was there that leadership was expressed. Some of them had great influence including Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena who were honoured as Doctors of the Church for their contribution to the church.

<sup>42</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 34. Patricia Gundry has commented, "When people of ability are shut out of an established way of doing things, they tend to generate new ways of doing things. And those ways frequently turn out to be better- not because the people generating them are necessarily superior in ability, but because, over time, institutional structures decay." See Howe, *Women & Church Leadership*, 72.

<sup>43</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 37. Maria L Boccia states, "When leadership involved the charismatic choice by God of leaders through the gifting of the Holy Spirit, women are included. As time passes, leadership is institutionalized, the secular patriarchal culture filters into the Church, and women are excluded. Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 38. Thinking again of the function of leadership, Brown states in Howe, *Women & Church Leadership*, 73: "While the apostle was of necessity a theological innovator, the bishop tended to become a preserver of the established tradition." See Eisen's argument in Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 207 and her summary 224 and Howe, *Women & Church Leadership*, 40.

There is a lesson for us here. Structure serves a purpose, as do offices. However, the church must always be ready to abandon old forms to ensure that the biblical function of ministry is not impeded. The gospel has advanced the most when men and women minister together in harmony. Also the flexibility of the house church remains a key to innovative leadership in the church. The large gathering of the church community must be balanced with smaller gatherings of cells or house churches.<sup>44</sup> This also gives women many opportunities to rediscover leadership roles in a non-threatening environment. The issue is not male leadership as opposed to female leadership, for when mission is emphasized, men and women work as equal teammates. This mirrors our organic image of a healthy family where the husband and wife work as a team. When women and men minister together in partnership, we have the basis for organic leadership development.

### **Communal Practices: Loving God and People**

We have discussed the structure of the house church and how it was suited to pass on the gospel in organic ways through organic relational networks. How was the message of the gospel embedded in the practices of the early church? What did early believers do to enact the gospel in everyday life? By understanding early church practices we can see how mentors passed on these practices to their mentoring partners.

In Mark 12:29-31, Jesus communicated that his Kingdom ethic could be reduced to two commandments: a complete love for God and a sacrificial love for people. Jesus was interested in people having a correct heart relationship with God and compassion for others. The gospel was about Jesus as the Son of God, and how belief in Him would bring people into relationship with God. Jesus was bringing about the Kingdom of God

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<sup>44</sup> Green, *Church without Walls*, 27-29.

as people allowed the King to reign in their hearts.<sup>45</sup> The Kingdom was not going to be a political entity but a community transformed, as Christ-followers lived out Kingdom values and Kingdom practices. We have a picture of early church practices in Acts 2:42-47, which says,

*They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together. Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord's followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.*<sup>46</sup>

The early church practised a love for God and people. They had a loving relationship with Jesus developed through teaching, worship and prayer. They had a loving relationship with each other fostered by time together, communal meals and radical generosity. They were close enough to non-believers who saw the power of God at work, were attracted to the gospel message and believed it. According to Banks, Christian community is the gospel expressed in corporate terms.<sup>47</sup> Simson adds: "It is the organic way disciples follow Jesus together in everyday life. Since the redeemed no longer belong to themselves, they adopt a mainly communal, rather than purely private and individualistic, lifestyle."<sup>48</sup>

The early church was committed to learning all it could about Jesus and his message. According to Barnett, the apostles filled Jerusalem with their teaching that

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<sup>45</sup> Luke 17:20-21.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 2:42-47 CEV

<sup>47</sup> Banks, *Church Comes Home*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Simson, *Houses*, 79.

Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God and the Lord.<sup>49</sup> The apostles passed on the stories of Jesus and eventually these were circulated in written form. Paul's letters, written before the Gospels, were also circulated and became the basis of church teaching.<sup>50</sup> The believers gathered to pray and worship. We don't know the actual forms of worship, but Paul refers to speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and to singing and making music in their hearts.<sup>51</sup> Stott sees this as a picture of early church worship.<sup>52</sup>

The early church first gathered around the temple in Jerusalem but also met in homes. Having a meal as a community was important. As the church was dispersed from Jerusalem, the home became the centre for meals and for celebrating the Eucharist. Their desire to share their resources with one another and show their love for the poor is noted in Acts 4:32-37. Barnabas was first mentioned here for his radical generosity. Stark acknowledges that the early church grew because of this radical love for people, when he quotes Tertullian: "It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. 'Only look,' they say, 'look how they love one another!'"<sup>53</sup>

This love, not only for one another, but also for those that society considered unworthy, was a mark of the early church. Stark gives convincing evidence of the growth of the early church due to the loving practices of believers and its effect on the surrounding population. He summarizes:

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<sup>49</sup> Barnett, *Birth of Christianity*, 69-70.

<sup>50</sup> Barnett, *Birth of Christianity*, 137.

<sup>51</sup> Eph 5: 19.

<sup>52</sup> Stott, *Ephesians*, 205-206.

<sup>53</sup> Tertullian, "Apology 39, 1989 ed" in Stark, *The Birth of Christianity*, 87.

God and often met in homes, these organic structures provided a natural setting for mentoring. Gehring says, "...the house church contributes to the development of leaders for church and missional ministry in a low-risk setting."<sup>58</sup> Perhaps mentoring comes into prominence when there are no familial affiliations. On the other hand, an organic mentoring process within the family is a model that is caught more than taught. The house church created a safe place for mentoring to occur and to deal with faith issues. They were a safe place to wrestle with theological ideas and discern appropriate faith responses.

We have looked at the house church historically to uncover some organic principles in mentoring. We saw how the early church grew through house churches. Organic leadership was built into the household structure. Men and women worked together in partnership, reflecting the organic nurturing that women bring, rather than the male preference for structure and hierarchy. They built spiritual practices that were centred on the centrality of a love for Jesus and other people. Mentoring has recently been revived, especially in the house church movement. Embracing a missional emphasis will ensure that the foundation of family and home does not create a fortress mentality, but keeps the mentoring process focused in the midst of gospel activity.

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<sup>58</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 304.

## **Chapter Four: Organic Mentoring in Mission**

We have already seen how the concept of the family of God impacts our understanding of mentoring. In this chapter we turn to the mission of God and explore how taking people into mission impacts the mentoring process. First we examine how the gospel of Jesus and his Kingdom grew through relational networks as part of the mission of God. We will see again how the household and community became foundational to mission. The apostle Paul lived out the ethic of the Kingdom in a way that affected how he saw others. We will see how Paul and his apostolic team strategically looked for insiders. We will understand how being an insider allows the gospel to move naturally through relationships. This foundation of mission principles will inform our view of organic mentoring.

### **The Mission of God**

In the last chapter we introduced the concept of Jesus bringing about his Kingdom of love. Jesus ensured that his disciples knew that the commandments to love God and love people had to be expressed outwards to the nations. He gave the great commission in Matthew 28:18-20 as an affirmation that the Kingdom of God at work in their hearts needed to be part of God's mission to the world. This is called the *missio Dei*, which is the redemptive mission of God to the whole world through the work of his Messiah.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, healthy Christian growth involves two parts: a redemptive aspect and one that is mission-oriented. "The disciple will find it necessary to pursue both a redemptive-level journey of personal growth and also a mission-level journey of

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<sup>1</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 83 and also see Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 16.



Christian service.”<sup>2</sup> Kingdom ethics were embedded in people who were engaged in Kingdom work and in the mission of God. This is what we mean by being missional.

Being missional meant that believers readily shared the gospel with those who were close to them. The gospel moved naturally through relational networks, through families and co-workers, through slaves to masters, and believing wives reaching their husbands. Wolf comments:

The three universal units of societies worldwide, according to anthropological research, are social systems based on 1) common kinship, 2) common community and 3) common interests. Now let us go one step further. Since this trinity of social systems is a part of present day human life, would we be so surprised to discover the same central characteristics in the human matrix of social life in the times of the New Testament? In fact, that is exactly what we find. For this phenomenon is not only transcultural, it is transhistorical, reaching across centuries.

The apostolic church used the interlocking social systems of common kinship/community/interest as the backbone for communicating the Gospel. The basic thrust of the New Testament evangelism was not individual evangelism, it was not mass evangelism; and it was definitely not child evangelism. The normative pattern of evangelism in the early church was *oikos* evangelism.<sup>3</sup>

Wolf reminds us that the natural, organic means of mission in the early church was through the *oikos* relationships. One person’s life impacted another, as exhibited in 1 Thess 2:8: “*We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become very dear to us.*” This was not some grand methodology, but a natural expression of love among friends. We have

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<sup>2</sup> Demarest, *Soul Care*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Wolf, “Oikos Evangelism,” lines 27-35. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 227-228. Gehring comments on the smaller groups in homes, “...they remained family-like, personal, friendly, and attractive to outsiders. Because the groups were small, it was easy to keep track of relationships and hold one another accountable.” 227.

evidence that the gospel penetrated into the emperor's home through slaves and even through the military guards around Paul's imprisonment.<sup>4</sup>

Michael Green highlights early church evangelism in four ways: public, home, personal and literary.<sup>5</sup> Paul publicly preached in the synagogues, at debating places in Athens and in town halls. He was not afraid to stand out in public to proclaim Christ. Celsus was known to complain about nameless people who prophesied inside and outside the temple.<sup>6</sup> Paul was not afraid to use his own personal testimony in front of civic authorities in Acts 22 and Acts 26.

We have already discussed the value of *oikos* or household ministry. The New Testament demonstrates that numerous homes were used as the base for ministry. The home allowed men, women, slaves, freedmen, clients, extended family, children, friends and guests to attend in a safe environment to discuss the gospel.<sup>7</sup> Whole households came to faith. Travelling evangelists were welcomed in a home, as hospitality was considered a high virtue.

People were gossiping the gospel, chattering with everyone about Jesus. This was part of the normal rhythm of life and extended along the relational networks. Jesus modeled this personal approach. Andrew invited Peter, while Philip finds Nathaniel

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<sup>4</sup> Celsus comments, "We see in private houses workers in wool and leather, laundry workers and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. But they get hold of the children privately, and any women who are as ignorant as themselves." This negative comment from a critic of Christianity reveals that the gospel was gossiped among ordinary people. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 243.

<sup>5</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Chapter 9. Green argues here for public evangelism. This may have worked for Paul in some settings and might be useful for some apostolic functions, but the more public form of evangelistic crusades seem to lack staying power and might create even more damage. See articles by Ayer, "Household Evangelism", Wolf, "*Oikos* Evangelism" and comments in Petersen and Shamy, *The Insider*, 71-73.

<sup>6</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 309.

<sup>7</sup> see again Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 75-77; and Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 320; Green quotes the Clementine Recollections: "The master of the house welcomed us, and led us to a certain apartment, arranged like a theatre, and beautifully built. There we found considerable crowds waiting for us, who had come during the night", 318.

(John 1:42, 45). Ananias is used to help Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9. Church fathers were engaged in personal evangelism: Pantaenus reached Clement of Alexandria; Justin reached Tatian; and Origen reached Gregory.<sup>8</sup>

A final method was through writing. The New Testament is made up of several books that were designed to convince the hearers of the gospel. Matthew and John can be seen in this way, as well as Luke-Acts. In the latter case the recipient was Theophilus who may have been either a seeker or recent convert. In all four methods listed by Green we see that relationships were important. Building healthy relationships is foundational to effective mentoring.

### **Missional Perspective**

As the apostle Paul lived out the Kingdom ethic he did so with a particular way of seeing the world. Paul had a missional perspective and this meant that he could adapt the gospel to fit into any context. In Acts 17 we see Paul taking time to observe the common interest points in that culture and even to use the Greek poets as his starting point to preach. This is contextualization of the gospel.<sup>9</sup> “The issue of cultural context is essential because the missional church shapes itself to fit that context in order to transform it for the sake of the kingdom of God.”<sup>10</sup> Paul contextualized the gospel and demonstrated his deep love for people through being others-oriented and willing to bear the cross of suffering.

For Paul, being others-oriented came from Jesus, who modeled humility and giving up one’s rights. Paul said, “*Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be*

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<sup>8</sup> Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 339, 342.

<sup>9</sup> For discussion on contextualization see Glasser and McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*, 139-140. Also Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 76-94 and 7.

<sup>10</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 7.

*humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too.*"<sup>11</sup> In reaching out to people he was willing to adapt to their culture, to become their servants, saying, *"I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some."*<sup>12</sup> Paul later says, *"I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved. And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ."*<sup>13</sup> This is motivated by Paul's love for Jesus and for people. As Jesus modeled the Kingdom ethic of a love for others, Paul wanted those he mentors to practise this as well.

A second expression of love is Paul's willingness to suffer. Paul said, *"I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead."*<sup>14</sup> Paul saw that suffering was part of the Kingdom practice and what Jesus meant by taking up our cross daily.<sup>15</sup> At a basic level suffering is felt when we choose to move out of our comfort zones. Nouwen calls this process voluntary displacement, saying, *"Once we begin to experience our actual physical, mental, and emotional displacements as forms of discipleship and start to accept them in obedience, we become less defensive and no longer need to hide our pains and frustrations."*<sup>16</sup> This forces the believer to examine more deeply the inner issues of Kingdom values and being a Christ follower.

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<sup>11</sup> Phil 2:3-4 NLT. Paul continues to reflect on Jesus as a model of sacrificial humility in verses 5-8.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor 9:22b. NLT

<sup>13</sup> 1 Cor 10:33b, 11:1. NLT

<sup>14</sup> Phil 3:10-11. NLT

<sup>15</sup> Luke 9:23.

<sup>16</sup> Nouwen et.al. *Compassion*, 73.

Another factor of contextualization was the missional team's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The New Testament mission relied on the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul and his band decided to abandon a mission into Asia and switched direction to Europe (Acts 16:6-10). Listening to the Spirit is critical for a missional leader. In all these ways, we see that the life of the Kingdom is embedded in what it means to be a leader and introduces a Kingdom way of 'being' to the mentoring partner. Having a Kingdom perspective will involve seeing people the way God sees them.

### **Becoming Insiders in Mission**

To understand Paul's missional strategy we need to introduce the concept of being an insider. The incarnation of Jesus, becoming one of us, is an example of what we mean by becoming an insider. The Message translates John 1:14 as, "*Jesus moved into the neighbourhood.*" He experienced its life, rhythm, and people from the inside and not as an outsider, taking thirty years to be a local carpenter before launching his ministry.<sup>17</sup> An insider is one who is natural to an environment, to the neighbourhood.

"The message of the kingdom is amplified as its citizens live out their unique calling in community. As they do the kingdom grows."<sup>18</sup> The early believers lived as a kingdom community and yet they maintained their relationships in society as insiders. This is incarnational missional ministry. Rodney Stark has documented the incredible organic growth of Christianity in the first three centuries. He comments,

Christianity did not grow because of miracle working in the marketplaces...it grew because Christians constituted an intense community.... The primary means of its growth was through the united and motivated efforts of the growing numbers of Christian believers, who invited their friends, relatives and neighbours to share the 'good news.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Petersen and Shamy, *The Insider*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 208.

Jesus encouraged followers to love those who were around them and so did Paul. The Roman world was turned upside down as ordinary believers lived not according to the culture of the empire but according to God's rule in their hearts. The way of God's kingdom ruled them.<sup>20</sup>

However, Paul and his apostolic team were 'outsiders' when they entered into a new territory. Paul began his ministry by laying a foundation with people whom he sensed were open to the gospel. He targeted households as places that could be a foundation to his ministry. The households consisted of insiders, such as Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. Petersen and Shamy comment,

Paul understood that if there was going to be an impact by the gospel in a place, it would have to be through the people of that place more than through the apostolic team. The team could get things started but only insiders could make the good news flow through their relational networks. And they would be there long term to see spiritual generations birthed and grown to maturity.<sup>21</sup>

We have already observed the incredible impact that the house churches had in the early church. Missional communities naturally shared the gospel with those around them as insiders. The apostolic team got the mission started, while the community was entrusted to keep the mission of God moving among their organic relationships.

We have lessons to learn through this pattern of insider ministry. Petersen and Shamy comment: "Jesus repeatedly instructs us to live out what we have before the people we rub shoulders with every day, among who we live as an insider. He tells us to love our enemies, to direct our hospitality toward those who need him, and to love our

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<sup>20</sup> Petersen and Shamy, *The Insider*, 34. Better terms might be "belonger" and "alongsider".

<sup>21</sup> Petersen and Shamy, *The Insider*, 71. Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 292 uses this insider language when he says, "Once accepted by the householder, Paul, his coworkers, and many other Christians became trusted insiders within this network of relationships and as a result were able to quickly reach out and touch the lives of large numbers of people for Christ." In time Paul was accepted as an insider. The goal of modern missionaries is to become insiders as soon as possible.

neighbours as ourselves.”<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately much of Christendom and some missionary efforts today abandon the insider position, forcing new believers to leave their natural relationships, and thus halting the normal movement of the gospel. In fact church leaders can look suspiciously towards a believer who is not involved in the programs of the institutional church. There is intense pressure for believers to abandon their insider position.<sup>23</sup> Insiders have a ‘go-to’ mentality, rather than a typical church’s ‘come-to’ attitude. Insiders centre their ministry in their own turf and not in a church building. Insiders see the relationship with a ‘seeker’ as far more important than programs or playing a church numbers game. As a person comes to faith through a personal relationship, mentoring can naturally continue. Forming a small group around the new believer is better than forcing that person to abandon his or her friendships. This may involve some strategic choices on the part of the evangelist. In some situations worldwide, it is seen as being more strategic to leave new believers in their normal cultural environment rather than immediately place them into an institutional church.

Ayer comments:

Extraction of converts from their families should be absolutely avoided. Among non-Christian communities extraction evangelism generates ill feeling and opposition. Even in cases where there is no opposition, converts extracted from their communities and families usually destroy bridges back to their own people. This hinders church growth especially among the peoples of strongly united families. Reaching households helps to solve this problem.<sup>24</sup>

Gehring reinforces the value of the family in mission, when he says, “Today it is evident that the family is still the natural cell for the establishment of missional house churches,

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<sup>22</sup> Petersen and Shamy, *The Insider*, 57, quoting from Mat 5:44; Luke 14: 13-14; Matt 22:39.

<sup>23</sup> See Ayer, “Household Evangelism.”

<sup>24</sup> Ayer, “Household Evangelism,” Item six, last page. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 228. Ayer and the OM team in India are seeing success with evangelism that honours natural relationships within the *oikos*.

just as it was in the past.”<sup>25</sup> As mentors we need to honour the role that our mentoring partners have as insiders and explore ways that they can naturally share the gospel in their contexts. Developing this kind of missional strategy will build a healthier organic mentoring pattern.

### **Taking People into Mission: Globally and Locally**

By taking mentoring partners into mission we can create useful growth opportunities. Demarest says, “Any journey we take in life can be enriching. Every time we travel away from the familiarity of home we become involved in a transformational process.”<sup>26</sup> We move out of our comfort zone. Using research from Victor Turner, Hirsch reflects on the rich learning that happens when we share an ordeal with a group of people: “During this shared ordeal, the initiates move from being disoriented and individualistic to developing a bond of comradeship and communality forged in the testing conditions of liminality.”<sup>27</sup> This creates an opportunity for humility, brokenness, and greater vulnerability. (This is what Nouwen calls voluntary displacement.) The potential missionary moves out of a position of strength into a position of weakness. Missionary couple, Thomas and Elizabeth Brewster, argue that the act of humbly learning a language endears one to a community and places the missionary out of his or her comfort zone and out of a power position.<sup>28</sup> We are bonded

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<sup>25</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 309.

<sup>26</sup> Demarest, *Soul Guide*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 221. Liminality is the transition process accompanying a fundamental change of state or social position, 220. People find themselves in a marginal, in-between state in relation to those around them. Similar experiences of *communitas* are seen in how New Yorkers responded to 9/11- the tragedy brought the community together. Turner’s ideas of liminality and *communitas* are discussed in Osiek, *Social Setting*, 69 and in Meeks, *Urban Christians*, chapter 3.

<sup>28</sup> Brewster and Brewster. *Language Learning IS Communication- IS Ministry*. Brewster and Brewster. *Bonding, and the Missionary Task*. The Brewsters have written this missionary booklet to guide budding missionaries. They argue that missionaries do not need to go to language school and separate from their



to those we want to reach in our brokenness. When we move out of our comfort zone and do this in a team or community we are also bonded with our fellow workers. This is what Turner calls *communitas* (Lat). Both the trials of voluntary displacement and the team bonding create rich moments for mentoring. Mentoring occurs in the context of ministering to others and at the same time building a deep work internally, as participants process what each is learning. This is an organic way of mentoring for it takes what we cannot normally see in a person's life and brings it to the surface. The mentoring issues are revealed naturally and can be dealt with in the process of ministry rather than in a static environment.

Potential missionaries, whether short-term or long, need to develop the attitude of an insider rather than that of a tourist. A tourist has certain expectations: a hot shower, a soft bed, three meals a day, and some ease of translation. In short, the tourist endeavours to stay in control as much as possible of any inconveniences. The insider, on the other hand, gives up the issue of control. The insider makes a conscious choice to move into the neighbourhood, like Jesus, towards voluntary displacement. This means to suffer the things the locals suffer. This means to eat what they eat, to share their lives, to become like them. This is what Jesus did as described in Philippians 2:5-8. When we give up our expectations, then we can be free to enjoy and learn from the local people. This bonds us to them and assists in the movement of the gospel. Doing this together, as a team in *communitas*, creates a rich learning environment in community. As the potential missionary struggles with some cultural adaptation, the mentor can work through the deeper issues that are involved.

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target community, but should be immersed immediately in their target area to humbly learn the language. Through humble brokenness and vulnerability they are bonded to their audience.

We do not need to go far to experience this voluntary displacement or to work at becoming an insider in the neighbourhood. For most of us in the affluent West the poor are nearby. There are opportunities to live among the marginalized for periods of time and partner with inner city ministries. We can learn some missional lessons as we surrender our rights to be comfortable. This involves gaining the missional perspective and see opportunities to serve that surround us.

Organic mentoring in a missional context gives the mentor an opportunity to see a mentoring partner in a different light. Often we can mask some of our true issues and needs when we are in our own cultural environment. By taking people into another cultural environment we can unmask some of the real character issues that need to be addressed. It is useful to encourage participants to journal their mission experience and then a mentor can help to discern the lessons that God wants the participant to learn. This causes the person to deal with the whole of life.

We have seen that rich mentoring occurred in the early church as Paul and his apostolic team advanced the Kingdom of God through the Mission of God. Paul was looking for insiders particularly in the household structures. As insiders naturally shared the gospel, the Kingdom advanced along relational lines. Mentoring is greatly enhanced as we take people out of their comfort zones into mission. We need to make sure that we don't allow people to be too comfortable in their learning environment. A place of voluntary displacement or liminality will ensure that some of the emotional deeper issues in a person's life can surface and be properly dealt with. Banding learners into teams ensures that *communitas* occurs and rich communal mentoring takes place.

## Chapter Five: Mentoring Today: Exploring modern mentoring patterns

In this chapter we will define mentoring and then examine mentoring patterns found in the business, church, discipleship and spiritual retreat literature. Despite seeing some benefits to mentoring in our four areas, we want to appeal to a more organic approach to mentoring. Organic ministry does not view mentoring in a formal way but sees mentoring expressed in the rhythms of life. We will conclude with some discussion on group mentoring, leader mentoring and peer mentoring.

### A New Horizon for Mentoring

Reflecting our organic ministry argument, Biehl says that we should avoid artificial or formal settings and meet wherever we are most comfortable,<sup>1</sup> and in contrast to Murray's business approach, reminds us that "mentoring is a relationship not a contract, a deal, an agreement, or a legal battle."<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew home provides us with our Biblical model:

*Listen, Israel! The LORD our God is the only true God! So love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, and strength. Memorize his laws and tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning. Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and foreheads to help you obey them. Write these laws on the door frames of your homes and on your town gates.*<sup>3</sup>

This fits with our model of a family, living life organically together, unfolding in a "pragmatic, holistic process of discovery in the concrete moments of life itself."<sup>4</sup> We agree with Anderson and Reese who say: "There are no limits placed by the Holy Spirit on times, places and moments when our souls can learn to sing. The helpful imagery of

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<sup>1</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-8 CEV- unless otherwise noted we will use the CEV for Biblical quotes.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 90.

parental conversation from Deuteronomy 6 offers a powerful description of the earthiness and practicality of learning spirituality ‘on the way’.<sup>5</sup> Jones summarizes our argument:

In our society, it seems, much nurturing is impromptu; spiritual direction takes place on the run. Riding together in the car; someone may start telling you about their interest in attending church. Or somebody pulls you aside after a meeting, passes you in the hall, approaches you in the parking lot. People often verbalize spiritual concerns, even if they mask them.<sup>6</sup>

Stoddard and Tamasey see the home as the best learning laboratory for mentoring. We can learn principles in the natural environment of the home and then mentor others outside.<sup>7</sup> The relaxed, natural environment is picked up by Biehl:

Most mentoring takes place in a relaxed setting: walking, sailing, golfing, driving—anywhere you are with your mentor or your protégé. Mentoring often happens ten minutes at a time, here and there as you move through life together. Don’t see mentoring as work. It often involves the joy of mutual sharing. Mentoring happens more in the context of a relationship than of a formal classroom. Mentoring is as much a life attitude as a formal structure. It can be even more enjoyable as you are doing things you enjoy together.<sup>8</sup>

Mentoring should happen as naturally as possible in order to lose some of the authoritarian and controlling tendencies we see in some discipleship models.

At the same time mentors need to create a learning environment. Being organic does not mean being lazy, or just hoping that growth will occur by osmosis. Mentoring is not just practiced by specialists, which is the danger of approaching mentoring solely with trained spiritual directors in mind. Mentoring should happen everywhere, just as the gospel spread in the early church. Anderson comments:

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 90.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, *Mentor-Friend*, 115.

<sup>7</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 203.

<sup>8</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 50. The mutuality of learning in mentoring is picked up by Stoddard in his relationship with Jim Petersen (Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 86) and also by Jones, *Mentor-Friend*, 100.

We would argue, however, that spiritual mentoring has become a ministry for the entire priesthood of believers, something to be practiced at kitchen tables, in offices, laboratories, factories and warehouses, on assembly-lines, on buses and in car-pools, as well as in Sunday-school classrooms and churches, for everywhere there are wise mentors and those ready to be mentored.<sup>9</sup>

Mentoring should happen wherever there are small groups of people who want to grow and mature in their faith.

In defining mentoring, Ambrose says it is “one person’s attempt to guide another... through the process of becoming a more fulfilled and productive member of the organization.”<sup>10</sup> Biehl sees mentoring in an individual way and defines it as “a lifelong relationship in which a mentor helps a protégé reach her or his God-given potential.”<sup>11</sup> Wright says that it is a strategy for leadership development, for personal leadership renewal.<sup>12</sup> He goes on to distinguish between mentoring, executive coaching and spiritual directors:

Mentors tend to ask questions that help us reflect on the link between character, leadership, and culture.... Executive coaches tend to ask questions that help us think about the applications linking leadership to productivity....Spiritual directors help us see how the gods we follow shape everything else.<sup>13</sup>

For our discussion we would see that mentoring is more complete than Wright would express. Mentoring would involve the whole of a person’s life and worldview but would not employ some of the specific techniques found with spiritual directors. We will discuss this in more detail later.

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<sup>9</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 55.

<sup>10</sup> Ambrose, *A Mentor’s Companion*, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 19

<sup>12</sup> Wright, *Mentoring*, xxix.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, *Mentoring*, 10. Wright here sees a continuum from gods to character to leadership to culture to environment to productivity. So in this way he argues that executive coaches deal with the final end of the process, mentoring more at the front end of the process and spiritual directors look at the whole process.

Western society is highly individualistic in its approach. People develop a worldview with themselves at the centre. What will I get out of it? Where will this benefit me? Our society does not ask the questions of what is best for the community. Even in the church we might be taught with an individual emphasis. What is *my* personal application from this passage? What changes will *I* make? These questions betray an individualistic approach to life and in particular to the Christian life. It must be argued that God is highly communal, for he relates as the Trinity in community.<sup>14</sup> He spoke the world into existence but it was the Spirit that gave it breath, and the Word was involved in the beginning.<sup>15</sup> The Trinity was involved in the creation of humanity, when God said, “Let us make man in our image...”<sup>16</sup> Throughout Scripture God reveals himself in a communal way. God desires to build a people of God who relate to him not so much as individuals but as a community, as a family, as a nation. In this way, then, we need to reread passages with an ‘us’ rather than a ‘me’ emphasis.

God relates to us personally rather than individually. He comes to us personally as we live in community. We are not meant to live life as individuals. It is useful to examine the many Pauline passages that refer to the “*one another*’s.” Romans 12:5 says, “*We belong to one another.*” This means that our individual decisions affect the rest of the family of God and perhaps the rest of humanity. We are not individual islands. My choice to sin or obey has an effect on the rest of the body of Christ and on my relationship to the world.

This affects our view of spiritual formation, our view of discipleship and mentoring. If we see mentoring as merely an independent relationship between two

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<sup>14</sup> Grenz, *The Social God*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Gen 1:2b, 3; John 1:1-3.

<sup>16</sup> Gen 1:26

people then we rob it of its influence on the rest of the community. Two people may have a mentoring relationship that is not connected with other people or the body of Christ. The person might be referred to as, “my disciple, or my protégé.” Another might be referred to as “my mentor.” Again, this betrays an individualistic approach.

A better approach in mentoring is to see our connection with the broader community, with the body of Christ. If a spiritual practice is developed that is not organic, it might be successful for a season or in a specific culture. However that practice then is difficult to transfer across cultural barriers or beyond generational boundaries. The more organic a practice, then the more likely it will endure. Since families are generic to all cultures, then we can use it as a model for mentoring. Even when physical families break down, there is a spiritual parallel within the family of God. We are all brothers and sisters and this relationship even has priority over our physical families.<sup>17</sup> The problem with most definitions of mentoring is that they assume a one-to-one relationship, divorced from the larger organization or body.

In each of the above definitions about mentoring there are various assumptions. Ambrose betrays his emphasis on the business side of mentoring, stating further that mentoring has not been in favour among ‘command-and-control type of managers’ who might not like the “touchy-feely” management style not conducive to the bottom line.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Biehl describes organic ministry when he says, “mentoring was assumed, expected, and, therefore, almost unnoticed because of its commonness in human experience.”<sup>19</sup> Mentoring was common on the farm, among artisans, and in medieval

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<sup>17</sup> Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, 98. We developed this earlier in chapter two.

<sup>18</sup> Ambrose, *A Mentor's Companion*, 1. See Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring* for even a stronger feel for the business model of mentoring.

<sup>19</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 9.

universities. Here, mentoring was part of the fabric of society. He continues to argue that the classroom has replaced the mentoring process, while virtually all training of the people of the Bible happened in the mentoring context.<sup>20</sup> On this point, we must agree.

The church today has relied too heavily on a didactic approach where one person with the body of knowledge communicates to a passive audience. This is highly inadequate as a teaching/learning model and cannot be called discipleship. Hence there has been a reactionary focus towards one-to-one discipleship, which has been pioneered by para-church organizations such as the Navigators and Campus for Christ.<sup>21</sup>

We will examine four patterns in mentoring: contemporary business literature, spiritual retreat literature, discipleship programs and church mentoring.

### **Mentoring within Contemporary Business Literature**

Murray provides us with a comprehensive business approach to mentoring. Murray emphasizes skills over character. She says, “Mentoring is a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or more experienced person with a less skilled or less experienced one, with the mutually agreed goal of having the less skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.”<sup>22</sup> She is looking for results, commenting, “Whether the organization is for profit or non-profit, the bottom line is improved results, such as increased productivity, increased quality of service, reduced costs, stakeholder value, a fidelity to donors’ purposes.”<sup>23</sup> Murray lists the benefits of mentoring for the mentoring

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<sup>20</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 10.

<sup>21</sup> See Vinzant, Don E. *Roots of the Modern Discipling Movement*. as well as the biographies of Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators: Robert Foster, *The Navigator*, and Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws*.

<sup>22</sup> Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, xiv.



partner, but also wants to make sure the mentors know that they can have a rich legacy as well.<sup>24</sup>

Other business authors who write about mentoring are less focused on the bottom line and focus on the need for character. Johnson and Ridley give a clear summary of the fundamentals of mentoring and outline the many positive character qualities needed in a good mentor and the appropriate positive qualities required in good mentoring partners.<sup>25</sup> Today popular business authors such as Covey, Collins, Cashman, Kouzes and Pozner all emphasize character over productivity.<sup>26</sup> They may not have any stated Christian bias but see the business value of ensuring that leadership is founded on character. This connects to our theme of organic ministry. Cashman argues that leadership works first on the inside of a leader before it is reflected outwardly. Organic leaders emerge whether formally appointed to roles or not. We follow leaders in an organization, especially in a voluntary organization such as the church, when we are confident in the leader's character.

In business literature the mentoring partner is valued, but still there is an underlying assumption around the bottom line. If a business is under financial strain, mentoring could be threatened. Wright comments,

How safe is the relationship? It is one thing to sustain a mentoring relationship when the organization is thriving. It becomes much more complicated when times are tough and positions are being eliminated.... If the organizational pressures become too personal or painful, it may be necessary to suspend the mentoring relationship until the organizational dynamics are resolved.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, 48-49 (benefits to protégé), and 62, 67 (benefits to mentor).

<sup>25</sup> See Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, xiii.

<sup>26</sup> See Covey, *The 8<sup>th</sup> Habit*; Collins, *Good to Great*, and *Good to Great and the Social Sector*; Cashman, *Inside Out*; and Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, *Mentoring*, 37-38.

Still, mentoring has exploded as a topic within business literature.<sup>28</sup> It may be more common to hear about mentoring in the business world than in church.

Christian authors who target the business world would include Maxwell, Wright, and Stoddard and Tamasey.<sup>29</sup> They bring biblical principles into their commentaries on business. In a direct contrast to Murray, Stoddard and Tamasey comment:

Accountability can be based on performance, but that is not what we are after in mentoring. Our concern is people not performance. Therefore, heart-based accountability must be our goal, focusing first on the relationship, regardless of performance.... The most effective leaders...are concerned about performance but know that if the heart is in the right place, performance will eventually fall in line. Genuine, enduring change must start on the inside and work outward.<sup>30</sup>

They continue to note that mentoring in the workplace focuses most commonly on behaviour and skills rather than on the inner person.<sup>31</sup> At the same time they recognize the potential conflicts of interest that a mentoring relationship might have for a supervisor, especially if he might need to fire the employee some day, adding, “However, because a mentoring relationship should never be allowed to interfere with fair and equitable business practices, it could become an obstacle to being able to mentor as fully and deeply as needed.”<sup>32</sup> At least they are being honest in revealing the underlying financial basis of mentoring in a business context, whether Christian or not.

Another problem within business is the struggle with the hierarchical approach to mentoring, even in the labels:

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<sup>28</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 11. Biehl points out that prior to the 1970’s there was no literature on mentoring. Between 1890 and 1980 there were four dissertations on mentoring, while between 1980 and 1984 there were one hundred dissertations on mentoring alone.

<sup>29</sup> See Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You*; Wright, *Mentoring: The promise of Relational Leadership*; Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*.

<sup>30</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 135. In this way they agree with Cashman, who does not write from a Christian foundation.

<sup>31</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 206.

Popular labels for the protégé include mentee, candidate, participant, apprentice, advisee, counselee, trainee, and student. Less popular synonyms are follower, subordinate, applicant, hopeful, and seeker. Some organizations simply use the term employee.<sup>33</sup>

Stoddard and Tamesey challenge these top-down forms and prefer to use ‘mentoring partner’ to emphasize a more egalitarian relationship.<sup>34</sup> Murray also favours facilitated mentoring over informal mentoring.<sup>35</sup> In a university venue, mentors and students employ learning contracts to create guided, individualized studies.<sup>36</sup> This is highly structured. This business style approach is the antithesis of the organic style of mentoring that we advocate.

### **Mentoring through Spiritual Retreats**

Dunne, Sellner and Jones reflect the more Catholic retreat approach to spiritual mentoring.<sup>37</sup> In the busyness of modern life, people are encouraged to withdraw for about a week of spiritual prayer, times of solitude, possibly a vow of silence over meals, and specifically an opportunity to talk with a trained spiritual director. The director, acting as a mentor, asks questions, listens and discerns spirits, noticing what is going on in one’s psyche.<sup>38</sup> This can be a valuable time for self-examination and true soul searching. However, this hardly seems natural to life. A criticism of this approach is that it forces us to seek mentors in a retreat setting, rather than build upon natural relationships and learn to ‘retreat’ in the flow of life.

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<sup>33</sup> Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> See Stoddard and Tamassey, *The Heart of Mentoring*. This is the term we are using.

<sup>35</sup> Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, 208. She argues strongly against informal mentoring employing a comparison chart with a structured approach.

<sup>36</sup> Murray, *Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, 99. This was from the Empire State College of the State University of New York and it appears similar to the Problem Based Learning approach used at the McMaster University Medical program.

<sup>37</sup> See Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring*; Sellner, *Spiritual Kinship*; and Jones, *Mentor-Friend*.

<sup>38</sup> Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 17.

The spiritual retreat approach does provide us with a direct contrast to a business approach. The foundation of this method is withdrawal from the normal patterns of life in order to slow down enough to listen to God and have the space for self-examination. There is a definite need for a focus on one's spiritual condition. This is often difficult in the busyness of normal life. Dan Webster comments, "There are things that God does in the heart of a leader that only get done in quiet."<sup>39</sup> The advantage of the spiritual retreat approach is that solitude and quiet are built into the program.

Having a trained spiritual director is helpful to guide the retreatant in his or her spiritual journey. Sellner gets us closer to the mark of organic mentoring, in talking about soul-friends.<sup>40</sup> Another problem is again the individualistic approach. Dunne admits that a retreat is "essentially about the decision of an individual, not of a group."<sup>41</sup> Dunne affirms our cry for a communal approach when he says, "The American Individualist Story inhibits individual hopes for shared living."<sup>42</sup> Granted, in a good retreat setting, private decisions are exposed to a community's scrutiny and response,<sup>43</sup> but individuals abandon their usual community and withdraw into a temporary community.

Marsha Sinetar outlines the need for a mentoring spirit in her work with educators.<sup>44</sup> She acknowledges that there are two levels of mentoring: skills and values. She encourages people to learn from mentors from films, books, or across the broad spectrum of life. In this way she is too broad for our definition of mentoring. However,

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<sup>39</sup> Webster, *The Real Deal*, 92.

<sup>40</sup> Sellner, *Spiritual Kinship*, 60. Sellner looks at the Irish practice of amamchura or soul-friend.

<sup>41</sup> Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Dunne, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> These observations come from Sinetar, *The Mentor's Spirit*, no pages.

she emphasizes the need ‘to be’ more than ‘to do,’ and this captures our heart of character at the root of mentoring. She has experienced the value of withdrawing on a spiritual retreat in order to balance life through silence and activity. She refers to mentors as artists of encouragement.<sup>45</sup> Despite a broad definition of mentoring, Sinetar affirms the need for an attitude toward mentoring among educators.

There is a need for follow up between the spiritual director and the home community from which the retreatant comes. Is it possible for us to create the kinds of community where we can mentor people and limit the need for mentoring partners to withdraw for spiritual direction? Can we build people in a more organic way?

### **Mentoring through Discipleship Programs**

Kreider says, “In the mid 1970’s a movement called the “discipleship movement”<sup>46</sup> was popular. We will use the example of the Navigator ministry for our examination of the modern discipling movement. Dawson Trotman founded the Navigators in 1933 but never intended to found an organization for his own purposes. He was committed to serve other organizations. Most prominent of these was Billy Graham and his evangelistic crusades. When Graham was a freshman at Wheaton, Trotman asked him what God had said to him in his devotions that morning. Graham commented, “Well, I hadn’t had my devotions. I hadn’t been with him five minutes until he was challenging my life...”<sup>47</sup> Trotman would go on to devote half of the Navigator resources to develop the follow up tools for Graham’s crusades. He was also passionate about missions, which was reflected in his friendship with Cameron Townsend, the

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<sup>45</sup> Sinetar, *The Mentor’s Spirit*, no pages.

<sup>46</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 147.

<sup>47</sup> Skinner, *Daws*. 379.

founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators. He also influenced Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ.<sup>48</sup>

Trotman was committed to prayer and the Scriptures. He was a fervent evangelist. His prayer and faith were infectious and linked him closely with Billy Graham. The theme of follow-up became so critical to Graham's success that he begged Trotman to help him. When Trotman said that he did not have time, Graham took him by the shoulders and said, "Who else? Who is majoring in this? You are the only one I know who is majoring in follow-up."<sup>49</sup> Trotman joined Graham at Crusades and was referred to as the "Apostle of Follow-up or Discipleship".<sup>50</sup>

Although this kind of discipleship is emphasized in the house church movement, it is still strangely lacking in many churches. Rather than build deeply into a few people who could reproduce their lives in others (2 Timothy 2:2), leaders prefer to gather large crowds or teach in classrooms and call that discipleship. Then they are shocked to discover that their students are not being fruitful. Trotman challenged this passive view of discipleship and actively developed a culture of lay people spiritually investing in others. In its most positive way, this pattern reflects our thesis of organic mentoring.

However, some organizations have received intense criticism for their practice of abusive discipleship and have been accused of cult-like tendencies, with highly authoritarian relationships.<sup>51</sup> A co-dependent relationship can develop between the

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<sup>48</sup> Foster, *The Navigator*, 179. See also, Skinner, *Daws*, 329.

<sup>49</sup> Foster, *The Navigator*, 131.

<sup>50</sup> Foster, *The Navigator*, 113ff. Foster uses this term for Dawson. For our discussion on mentoring, we see that follow-up is the initial phase of discipleship. Discipleship in turn refers to the early years of building spiritual disciplines into a young believer, while mentoring refers to a more comprehensive approach of life on life ministry.

<sup>51</sup> Don E. Vinzant, *Roots of the Modern Discipling Movement*. Available from <http://www.somis.org/TDD-08.html> (accessed 4 February, 2006), 129.

mentor and mentoring partner in one of these discipleship relationships. Kreider comments,

Good discipleship principles were sometimes overshadowed by unhealthy one-to-one relationships where leaders required those under their authority to get their approval before making decisions such as dating, marriage, and even visiting relatives during holidays! In some cases, families were split apart and lives turned upside down.<sup>52</sup>

The true purpose of mentoring is lost in these cases. Love for God and for people is abandoned and a practice of intense power and control is instituted. Intense one-to-one mentoring relationship can become divorced from the broader church community, especially in some para-church organizations. An elitist tendency can be fostered. This is dangerous to body life and is why we argue for a communal approach to mentoring. Even small group leaders may try to force intimacy with God, with other strangers, or with disciples or mentors. This may be well intended but may not be what every person needs at that time in his or her life.<sup>53</sup>

The Navigators took discipleship and mentoring into the mainstream of life, and saw it as an organic way of living the Christian life and not just a program to be added to the church curriculum. Trotman wanted to make sure people took on the responsibility of spiritual parenting and spiritual reproduction. At one of his last talks he challenged his listeners that they were born to reproduce spiritually.<sup>54</sup> His commitment that ordinary people could, and should become mature mentors of others was a major contribution to our theme of organic mentoring.

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<sup>52</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 147.

<sup>53</sup> Myers, *Organic Community*, 46. Myers says that a forced intimate connection is rape.

<sup>54</sup> Dawson Trotman, *Born to Reproduce*. Talk given in 1956; recorded for Canadian Navigator Conference, 2002 on CD. Also printed in a booklet- Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992. This is also reflected strongly in Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*.

## Mentoring in the local Church

Mentoring in the church is promoted by Biehl, Pue and Kraft.<sup>55</sup> They see mentoring being worked out in specific detail. However, the idea of mentoring has not penetrated most churches. The evangelical church in Canada is focused largely on weekly services, with the sermon as the centrepiece of its structure. Some churches will develop small groups, cell groups or bible studies. Often these are seen as supplementary to the weekly service. Rarely are small groups seen as the centrepiece of the church structure. In the house church movement, house churches gather weekly, with perhaps a monthly gathering of all house churches for worship. Some organizations have developed specific church discipleship ministries, and some church leaders promote discipling.<sup>56</sup> Vickie Kraft has developed a tool for mentoring women in local churches, which is highly programmed and intensely detailed.<sup>57</sup> This makes it reproducible as a program but it lacks the spontaneity and creativity that we would want to see in an organic mentoring movement.

That is the problem. How do you develop mentoring within a church structure where a didactic teaching process overwhelms an organic mentoring environment? How can mentoring become a normal part of church life? We believe that it is within the small group or house church setting that mentoring can organically occur.<sup>58</sup> The house church creates the right atmosphere of identity, growth and community, where mentoring can happen. However mentoring does not happen through the process of

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<sup>55</sup> See Biehl, *Mentoring*; Pue, *Mentoring Leaders*. and Kraft, *Leaders Who Last*.

<sup>56</sup> See Kraft, *Leaders Who Last*. and Biehl, *Mentoring*. Also see books by Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*; Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader*; Cosgrove, *Essentials of Discipleship*; Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciplemaker*.

<sup>57</sup> Kraft, *Women Mentoring Women*.

<sup>58</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mother*. Kreider's ministry is built around the house church movement and this book argues for a mentoring approach and for spiritual multiplication.



merely gathering a group of believers together. Leadership needs to intentionally create the environment in which organic mentoring can take place.

### **Group Mentoring: Benefits and Obstacles**

Biehl argues that mentoring is ninety-nine percent one-to-one. He says, “It’s a one-to-one ministry, and participants need to understand that and be comfortable with it.”<sup>59</sup> He would represent the strongest proponent of one-to-one mentoring, and it must be admitted that this is the norm. At the same time, mentoring in small clusters of three or four can provide some distinct advantages. What have the authors said about group mentoring?

Anderson and Reese remind us that mentors need to be good listeners and learn from others. It must not be just a one-way monologue. “The mentor serves best who remains the number one learner.”<sup>60</sup> In the business world, Murray acknowledges that there can be a greater efficiency to group mentoring, especially when all participants have the same skill gaps.<sup>61</sup> In spiritual direction, Sellner acknowledges that mentoring is not limited to one-to-one relationships, but can also include large groups, while Jones recognizes that in the group environment, people often hear God’s word through dialogue.<sup>62</sup> Johnson sees that we should develop mentoring constellations or networks, with one primary mentor as well as secondary mentorships.<sup>63</sup> This demonstrates the value of moving away from a strict one-to-one approach. We gain much wisdom in the company of many voices. We can learn so much from other sources, especially when

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<sup>59</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 162.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 52.

<sup>61</sup> Murray, *Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring*, 110.

<sup>62</sup> Sellner, *Spiritual Kinship*, 58 and Jones, *Mentor-Friend*, 53. Kreider sees some value to group mentoring but does not give up the intentionality of person-to-person mentoring, Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 123.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, 61. For the idea of constellations of mentors see Clinton and Stanley, *Connecting*.

we are all committed to the growth of an individual. Mentors are able to more fully engage in the learning process, guiding the learning of all participants and not feeling that all learning needs to come from one source alone: the mentor. This reduces the pressure for the mentor to always be 'on'. The mentor can enjoy the process and the journey. The group process allows the mentor moments to learn from the others.

Wright captures our argument:

I believe that some of the same benefits- encouragement, affirmation, perspective and challenge- can be found in small groups of persons committed to one another's leadership and growth.... In other ways it is easier to hold ourselves accountable when we have the multiple commitments of the group.... [Wright calls them] "learning communities" where leaders belong, where they have something to offer and something to learn, where they feel safe enough to think out loud, and where they find encouragement, affirmation, and hope. The mentored learning is still individual; it is the responsibility of the mentoree.... At the same time, group relationships provide multiple lines of accountability and diversity of perspective as we encourage each other's leadership journey.<sup>64</sup>

Wright is referring here to leadership mentoring. This applies to a group of leaders who choose to submit their development to a group of peers. They still maintain ultimate control on the process for they can pull out of the arrangement at any time. Peer mentoring is valuable as the default setting in a house church or small group. In this context each person voluntarily submits to the group and chooses to learn from the group. At the same time individuals should have mentors who feed into their lives, while they in turn build into other mentoring partners. This is called a mentoring constellation.<sup>65</sup> There is value to mentoring in small clusters, especially in groups of three to four (triads and quads).

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<sup>64</sup> Wright, *Mentoring*, 61.

<sup>65</sup> For a fuller discussion of the various ways mentoring can be described see Clinton and Stanley, *Connecting*, 162. They have a chapter on Peer Mentoring, 169-196.

Some disadvantages to group mentoring would include having difficulty in getting the group to meet consistently and the challenge of coordinating schedules. Also there are specific needs that an individual might have that can best be served in a one-to-one mentoring role. However it is hoped that most needs can be met within healthy body life.

We have looked at modern mentoring from different perspectives and observed some of the assumptions and dangers that mark each pattern of mentoring. We have noticed the individualistic approach that the Western paradigm brings. We have also provided a case for a more organic approach to mentoring, including some advantages to mentoring in small clusters. Organic ministry that thrives is grounded in authentic mentoring relationships that are neither contrived nor programmed. Keeping the family and the house church as biblical models ensures that we maintain communal values. Organic mentoring is enhanced in a missional community and is protected from some of the abuses of intense one-to-one relationships or cult-like tendencies. This is especially significant, as we consider authentic mentoring for the next generation.

## Chapter Six: Organic Ministry: Strategic Thoughts for Today's Church

Mentoring the next generation in this rapidly changing environment will involve creative, organic leadership. Daniel Egeler describes the Millennials (those born after 1982) as resourceful and full of promise, which is similar to the GI generation of World War II.<sup>1</sup> This next generation of leaders, according to Egeler, are the next hero generation, wanting to make a difference, and yet are often scarred emotionally by the neglect of their Boomer parents. Millennials are being drawn in large numbers to innovative churches. They want to volunteer, but their service must be engaged where they know they can make a difference. Millennials are not interested in structure, organizations, traditions or rules. As the next hero generation, they are willing to sacrifice financial gain in order to serve the marginalized. This generation might be anti-authoritarian with respect to institutions and organizations but they still respect parental figures that are authentic and love them.<sup>2</sup> We conclude our study by examining how the missional church impacts Millennials, by seeing how this informs mentoring, by exploring the practical steps of mentoring values and practices, and finally by identifying the mentoring skills of active listening and developing good questions.

### Becoming a Missional Church

So far we have viewed mentoring and organic ministry from the paradigm of the existing institutional church. Unfortunately the organic model of family, house church and being missional is lost on many church leaders. They are trapped in an institution

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<sup>1</sup> Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 11. Egeler quotes Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, "The GI generation (born between 1901 and 1924), the Silent generation (born between 1925 and 1942), the Boomer generation (born between 1943 and 1960), and the Xer generation (born between 1961 and 1981). The authors call the current generation the Millennials, those young people born since 1982, whose parents are part of the Boomer generation," 27.

<sup>2</sup> Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 11.

that may be dying and a whole new paradigm of seeing church may need to be developed. Theologically, “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology. It is absolutely vital that the church gets the order right.”<sup>3</sup> What if our whole view of church needs to change into an organic model, with the church part of a grand adventure, functioning in an incarnational, missional way?

Alan Hirsch, in *The Forgotten Ways*, says: “The problem is that most people see the church as an institution and not an organic movement (a living system), in spite of the fact that the Bible is replete with organic images of church and kingdom (body, field, vine, soil, etc.).”<sup>4</sup> Hirsch reminds us that the early church was an organic missional movement and not a religious institution.<sup>5</sup> Hirsch examines the early church and also the current missional movements, to illustrate what happens when church structures and denominational trappings are eliminated. Organic growth occurs when Jesus is the Lord and centre of the community, discipleship involves learning on the go, apostolic leadership teams incorporate the five-fold functions of leadership, organic systems network with each other in cells, and true *communitas* is experienced in a missional church, creating spiritual growth and community. Let us explain each part.

Hirsch looks at the underground and persecuted church and notes that they needed to “jettison all unnecessary impediments, including that of a predominately institutional conception of *ecclesia*. But perhaps even more significantly, they have to

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<sup>3</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 253. See also Myers, *Organic Community*.

<sup>5</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 67 and Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 253. Frost and Hirsch say: “The missional-incarnational church then sees itself as part of an ongoing process, not an end in itself. The days when churches would build monolithic church buildings and proudly proclaim that they’ve been here since 1861 (or whenever) are ending. Now churches will see themselves as strategic parts of an organic rhythm of witness.” Institutional churches can join in this movement, but it will take creative, courageous leadership. Small groups that are involved in local mission will help. See Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 308-311, where he describes church planting through the Anglican Church in the U.K.

condense and purify their core message that keeps them both faithful and hopeful.”<sup>6</sup>

There is a recovery of the simplicity of Jesus and his message. Jesus becomes the focal point and centre of the community. It also means that the message can be easily transferred along relational lines. “Freed from the philosophical density of the academy and from dependence on the professional cleric, the gospel becomes profoundly ‘sneezable.’”<sup>7</sup> The gospel moves from the realm of religion and becomes an organic movement, as it was in the early church. What Hirsch argues is that each believer carries missional DNA, or mDNA, and as believers infect others with the gospel, the ‘virus’ spreads along relational lines. For Hirsch a missional church is a “community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world.... When the church is in mission, it is the true church.”<sup>8</sup>

Disciplemaking happens in the context of mission as well. This would follow our earlier comments of how Jesus and the apostle Paul developed spiritual formation and mentoring in their followers. Jesus and Paul organized discipleship around mission. The problem with our modern process of leadership development is that we have abandoned both the apprentice model and the missional context. Potential leaders are withdrawn from their ministry contexts and expected to study in abstract environments

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<sup>6</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 85. Referring to the house church in China, Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 308, comments: “House churches are small and therefore manageable in terms of pastoral care needed in the group. They allow for the relatively rapid development of intimate personal relationships and provide a meeting place for prayer. They make it easier to share life experiences, to care for and to serve one another. The leaders of such house churches know their people personally and can better prepare their sermons and Bible studies to meet the needs of the members of their group.”

<sup>7</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 82. The difference between an institutional structure is that it is hierarchal and exercises command and control, while an organic structure is networked and each participant carries the mDNA, a simple, intrinsic, reproducible, central guiding mechanism. This is characteristic of genuine missional movements, 76-77. This idea of the gospel being sneezed would mirror Green’s research in *Evangelism in the Early Church*.

and are often unable to immediately apply their learning. Hirsch, commenting on how Jesus formed his disciples, said: “They not only lived with him and observed him in every possible circumstance, but also ministered with him and made mistakes and were corrected by him, all in the context of everyday life.”<sup>9</sup> Whole people are developed in the context of the whole of life.

Church leadership must reflect more of a missional emphasis because the church today can no longer be merely “attractional” as it has been since Constantine.<sup>10</sup> People are not naturally coming to church. In the West we need to develop a mindset that sees ourselves as missional. Church leadership then must be more apostolic. As such, churches need to include the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching functions of leadership (Eph 4:11). Apostolic leadership “involves an organic, relational style of leadership influence that evokes purpose, movement, and response from those who come into its orbit.”<sup>11</sup> Leadership creates an environment where the emphasis is on the function and not the form or office. We need to ask why we are doing what we are doing. If a certain form or practice no longer serves a purpose, leaders must be willing to end a practice and discover a new relevant form. This ensures that new wine is placed in new wineskins and requires secure, creative leaders.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 123.

<sup>10</sup> By attractional we mean an expectation that people would come to a church because it exists, it is the centre of the community and foundational to the society. This has a “come-to” mentality rather than a missional “go-to” mentality. People in the West have largely abandoned the idea that the church is at the centre of their social existence. This is powerfully seen in Europe and other parts of the secular West.

<sup>11</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, chapter 10 and Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 161. The apostle is often the entrepreneur and innovator. The prophet is the questioner. The evangelist is the communicator and recruiter. The pastor is the humanizer and people-oriented motivator. The teacher is the systematizer and philosopher, able to communicate the vision. It is better to see these terms as functions rather than offices. See Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 173.

<sup>12</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 69. They quote Howard Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins*, 69-73 and say: “...church buildings attest to five facts about the Western church: its immobility, inflexibility, lack of fellowship, pride and class divisions.”

Mentoring takes on the flavour of a ‘midwife’, which was what Socrates called himself, as he saw his role as helping others discover truth for themselves.<sup>13</sup> The nurture of a midwife as a feminine image reminds us of gender inclusivity. Seeing our role in leadership as a farmer is another organic way to picture mentoring. A good farmer creates the conditions for good growth, and is understanding of the natural rhythms, which are out of his or her control. Trying to think of mentoring with these organic models in mind will help us to develop better mentoring practices.

The early church was an organic system not an institutional one.<sup>14</sup> The Bible uses organic metaphors such as body, field, yeast, seeds, trees, living temples, vines, animals, not only to describe theological truth but also to describe how we are to minister. The more organic our structure, then the more likely the gospel will multiply. An organic image of church and mission is much richer than the mechanistic and institutional conception we have devised over time.<sup>15</sup> A network of cells becomes a model of church growth that is more organic. It is a living system. It has the mDNA of growth and reproduction built into each believer. Leadership then needs to encourage

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<sup>13</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Gehring sees leadership emerging out of the *oikos* structure with the *paterfamilias* naturally filling the role of elder, teacher and overseer, especially when itinerant leaders were not there. (Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 196-210) The Pastoral Epistles talk about organized leadership roles, referring to the bishop, elder and deacon. Our difficulty in any discussion of leadership is distinguishing between the function (to lead) and the office or position (the leader). In the New Testament we know of leadership functions of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, administrator, bishop, elder, deacon, servant, patron. Some of these are interchangeable functions or roles. It is tempting to see these roles or offices through the grid of twenty centuries of church history, so that we see a bishop as a monarchical episcopate rather than in the function of an overseer, as one who gives oversight to a community of believers. Is it possible to see these offices as more organic than tradition has allowed us to? Guthrie argues that elder and bishop are used interchangeably in the Pastorals, and that Paul was not so much concerned with orthodoxy and organization, as with qualified leaders to guide the Spirit led movement when apostolic witnesses were gone. (Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 24-32) Bromiley gives us the background of the NT words, saying that there is room for a more organic interpretation on these offices. (Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary*, 244-248; 931-935)

<sup>15</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 180-181. For a comparison of the organic missional movement and institutional religion see the chart on 196. In contrast see Gehring, *House Churches and Mission*, 299 on the value of the institutional church in preserving tradition, continuity and the duration of the church.



the organic reproduction of each cell. Potential leadership needs to be developed organically within each cell and not be uprooted from the church and sent off to a training institution.<sup>16</sup> The church becomes more liquid and less static, which means that it is more flexible, adaptive and responsive to change. Instead of the centralized and more “solid’ hierarchical structure of the later church, we observe the more fluid network of the NT church.”<sup>17</sup> The benefit of independent networks of cells is that they are difficult to destroy, as we see with the Al Qaeda network and the current Chinese underground church. The success of these networks is due to an organic structure that has a type of mDNA at its core and is spread like a virus. Incredible potential for multiplication is available when we combine an organic living system with a genuine movement ethos in networked structures. Mentoring in this context must be consistent with the organic processes.

We have already discussed the power of *communitas*. Rather than take people out of their comfort zones into mission, what if the community itself was already engaged in mission? This is the preferable place to be. If our churches are missional, and built around reproducible cells, with apostolic leadership, ministry does not follow a master plan, but is on the edge of chaos. Hirsch uses the image of being in a closed environment of the fish tank as a metaphor of the modern church. A fish tank is comfortable for the fish, but it cannot stand much disruption to its environment or the fish will die. However, if the fish are in the ocean, they have many more threats and

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<sup>16</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 187. I agree with Hirsch here in regards to the evolution of the seminary as first a training place and then in time the ordaining determinant for leaders. Institutional leadership is developed this way, but not organic leadership. The church and seminary need to look hard at this process of leadership development and see how to better develop leaders at the grassroots.

<sup>17</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 199. Kreider’s ministry DOVE Christian Fellowship International is an example of networking. Beginning as a house church movement it has developed into a network of independent churches.

thus build up resistance and are able to better withstand these threats.<sup>18</sup> Ministry on secular campuses demonstrates the value of Christian students learning ministry in the ocean of conflicting ideas rather than being cloistered in an all-Christian environment.

Hirsch's analysis may be too critical of the institutional church, for he forgets that God has historically used the Church to foster new movements. Church structure and tradition helps to protect the Church from sudden changes and false teachings.<sup>19</sup> The Holy Spirit is capable of reviving the institutional Church and creating new organic patterns. God loves to create new life out of what may appear to be dead.

Mentoring should not just involve the issues of life, but should recruit participants into mission, into the adventure of life. The metaphor of Tolkein's *The Fellowship of the Ring* is useful to us. Hobbits preferred living comfortably but are tasked with others to go on a great mission of destroying the ring. Fellowship is enhanced because the participants are engaged on a great mission. They become powerful allies. Left to themselves, without a mission, they would not get along. This coincides with our earlier observations that taking people into mission enhances learning. The unfortunate observation is that much of the church in the West prefers to be like the Hobbits, content to lead a middle class life: one of comfort, security and consumerism. Missional mentoring will ensure that deeper issues are confronted in a person's life and that the issues are gospel centred, while engaged in God's adventure.

### **Missional Values, Disciplines and Skills**

How do we build spiritual values and disciplines in an organic mentoring way? We believe with Frost and Hirsch in arguing that effective learning and spiritual

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<sup>18</sup> Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways*, 229-230.

<sup>19</sup> Banks, *Church Comes Home*, 61-62. There are reports that the house church movement in China suffers from autocratic leaders taking charge in house churches and becoming authoritarian.

formation happens in the context of active mission.<sup>20</sup> It is in the midst of engaging with the world that we discover the questions that need to be asked and we uncover the deeper theological issues that matter to people. There needs to be the rhythm of the inner and outward journey. For the next generation, we believe that character, identity and authenticity need to be developed in community. To accomplish this, mentoring partners should develop the disciplines of journaling, seeking truth and positive accountability. Mentors need to ask good questions and listen well.

Effective organic mentoring is built on character. Christ-like character qualities would include faithfulness, availability, teachability, humility, gratitude, generosity, and sexual purity. Character is often revealed in relationships. How does the person relate to family and friends? How does the person resolve conflict? The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 might reveal an area to focus on in our discussion and study. Wright comments, “Character is the mix of commitments, beliefs, passions, and assumptions that forms who we are. Our character defines us and is expressed in the values that we bring to life and leadership.”<sup>21</sup> It is no accident that even the secular business literature values character in leadership.<sup>22</sup> Stanley reminds us that character involves doing what is right even when it is hard, and that character is the invisible badge of a leader’s moral authority.<sup>23</sup> The mentor cannot cover every area in a person’s life. Some areas of character will be developed in a small group or a house church or occasionally through a public teaching moment. Mentoring is not to meet every need, but to be sure every need

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<sup>20</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things*, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Wright, *Mentoring*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Covey, *8<sup>th</sup> Habit*; Collins, *Good to Great*; Cashman, *Inside Out*; Kouzes and Pozner, *Leadership Challenge*.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley, *Next Generation Leader*, 113, 117.

is met.<sup>24</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey comment, “Character is what is left after the fire. In other words, it’s the proof of who we really are as revealed after being tested and refined by life’s experiences, in good times and bad times.”<sup>25</sup> They go on to see character as the substance of mentoring, and humility as the substance of character.<sup>26</sup> With this we whole-heartedly agree.

Too many leaders are placed in positions of authority on the basis of talent, skill or competency. Their leadership will only develop to the extent of their character. An unchecked character flaw will kill a missional movement. As mentors, we must be prepared to work at building emotionally healthy Christ followers. Mentors need to go beyond spiritual disciplines and address emotional issues as well. Scazzero calls this discipleship’s missing link, that Christ-like maturity will only come when we address the whole person and that emotions are the language of the soul. He says, “In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God.”<sup>27</sup> Building love and trust in our relationships as mentors will ensure that when a character flaw needs to be confronted, a humble, teachable response can be expected.

Our identity in Christ is critical to our spiritual growth and ministry. When Jesus was baptized, his identity was affirmed when God spoke and said, “*You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.*”<sup>28</sup> He knew that he belonged to God, that God loved him and that God was pleased with him. This sense of identity empowered Jesus in his ministry. In John 13, Jesus knew where he had come from and where he was

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<sup>24</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 117.

<sup>25</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 139.

<sup>26</sup> Stoddard and Tamasey, *The Heart of Mentoring*, 140.

<sup>27</sup> Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Church*, 53. I found that Scazzero’s book was helpful in seeing that discipleship is more than just building spiritual disciplines. The whole person includes the emotions and we need to pay attention to them. Mentors should look at the emotions as diagnostic windows to the soul.

<sup>28</sup> Mark 1:11NIV.

going, so that he was free to act as a servant and wash his disciples' feet. He was secure in his identity. Today, when young people are having their identity constantly challenged, or have suffered from parental divorce, we need to affirm their identity as beloved children of God. They need to know that God is pleased with them. This gives them a sense of security and confidence.

Authenticity is critically important for the Millennial generation. They seek relationships that are real and honest. They have largely rejected organized religion because they see it as unreal and incapable of relating to their generation. Webber says, "For younger evangelicals authenticity is what matters."<sup>29</sup> Cashman defines leadership as authentic self-expression that creates value, and goes on to say, "Authenticity requires a lifelong commitment to self-discovery and self-observation."<sup>30</sup> Egeler says that this generation longs for God and are activists, "but the focus of their passion needs to be something that is authentic and genuine."<sup>31</sup> He then adds, "...this generation wants to see authenticity in adult lives and not just words. In sum, this is the essence of mentoring."<sup>32</sup> As mentors we must both teach the truth and live the truth. This implies that as leaders we must be vulnerable, transparent and honest about our own flaws and about the mistakes made within the history of Christendom. Nouwen reminds us that "...only those who have been wounded by the suffering of life can be authentically available to others; it is through telling our own histories of pain and joy that we can

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<sup>29</sup> Webber, *Younger Evangelicals*, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Cashman, *Inside Out*, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 36.

<sup>32</sup> Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 68.

serve the needs of others, which is ministry.”<sup>33</sup> It is this authenticity and honesty that Millennials are seeking.

We mentor not in isolation but in a missional community as part of the family of God. We partner with the next generation while affirming their strong need for relationship. We have already examined the role that the house church played in the missional movement of the early church. Today, the small group, missional team or house church is critical to connecting individuals to the *missio Dei*. According to Sweet, “the best way into the postmodern home is through the family.”<sup>34</sup> Higginbotham sees the Millennials as the “House-Church Generation” that embraces relational, participatory, egalitarian, and non-authoritarian values.<sup>35</sup> The small group or house church needs to have a sense of service and mission that is filled with compassion for the marginalized and the poor. It cannot function as a mere refuge from the world. We need to be a missional community and this begins with the small group.

Journaling is the discipline that helps to affirm identity and connect with authenticity. Journaling is part of the old discipline of reflection, combining scripture reading, reflection and prayer. Webster quotes Blaise Pascal when he says, “Most of our problems come from our inability to sit still.”<sup>36</sup> Webster also affirms that it is in quiet that we are reminded of our identity as children of God.<sup>37</sup> In a world of busyness and noise, it is critical to pause, to reflect and through the recording of observations and prayers, allow for the Spirit to point out areas of need. This assists the process of self-

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<sup>33</sup> Nouwen, *Wounded Healer*, 88.

<sup>34</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 311.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Higginbotham, “The Generationally Indigenous Church,” *Regeneration Quarterly* 5 (1,1997) 32-33, as quoted in Banks, *Church Comes Home*, 225.

<sup>36</sup> Webster, *Real Deal*, 91. Webster reinforces the need for journaling for leaders. See Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, for meditation see 15-32; for solitude see 96-109. Millennials can rediscover these ancient disciplines, which will assist mentors in the mentoring process.

<sup>37</sup> Webster, *Real Deal*, 93.

discovery noted above. Mentors can help their mentoring partners process what God is saying as they journal.

Seeking truth is more than just reading and studying Scripture. Scripture is a major part of anyone's diet of truth for it tells us God's grand story. But God is telling this story in many different ways. If we are committed to seeking truth we will see the gospel reflected in stories around us: in poetry, books, movies, TV, music, and commercials, which often reveal a Biblical truth imbedded in the story. These become the tools in our missional community to share truth and to discover God. Seeking truth helps us to connect our story with God's story and with the story of our broader community. This discipline helps to ensure that our identity is affirmed by God, our authenticity is Biblically grounded and our community is Christ-centred.

Positive accountability also connects authenticity to community. Gehring agrees, "A person who belongs to a small group cannot distance himself or herself from the group for there exists a healthy accountability one to another that usually leads to more authenticity."<sup>38</sup> When we are part of a missional community, we must ensure that we are close enough to a few committed friends and mentors who will ask the deeper questions and encourage us to hold true to our beliefs and values. Myers prefers the term edit-ability rather than accountability. For him accountability is negative and keeps records; editors wipe away errors while keeping the voice of the author.<sup>39</sup> We see positive accountability as being encouraging, cheering one another along, emphasizing grace not law. This is the spirit of organic mentoring.

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<sup>38</sup> Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 305.

<sup>39</sup> Myers, *Organic Community*, 139.

This is why the skill of listening and asking questions is critical for a mentor. The mentor must become trilingual, listening to the mentoring partner, listening to the Holy Spirit, and listening to his or her own heart and insights.<sup>40</sup> Listening helps others relax. Jones refers to someone who says that ninety percent of his effectiveness as a counsellor is related to listening. He says, “When we offer a listening ear, we offer a powerful reminder to others that God listens to them.... Our primary role is not to provide answers, but to listen in a way that helps us, and our friend, listen to what God is saying.”<sup>41</sup> Listening is another aspect of seeking truth.

Wright quotes Max DePree who believes that asking questions is one of the most important tasks of a leader and a mentor.<sup>42</sup> Wright has three mentoring questions: “What is the most important thing in your life?” This addresses character. “Projecting yourself forward to the end of your life, what do you want to be known for?” This addresses legacy. “At this stage in your journey, what do you need to learn next?” This focuses on the present.<sup>43</sup> Biehl has two simple questions: “What are your priorities? How can I help?” He sees that a mentor’s role is to show the way and help with the key decision points in a person’s life.<sup>44</sup> Biehl refers to Steve Douglas who asks, “What are the three things (goals or problems) we can do in the next ninety days to make a fifty percent difference?”<sup>45</sup> Ambrose wants mentors to ask about strengths and weaknesses, and to discover short-term and long-term goals.<sup>46</sup> Kreider lists a number of questions for

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<sup>40</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 96-97.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, *Mentor-Friend*, 108.

<sup>42</sup> Wright, *Relational Mentoring*, 68.

<sup>43</sup> Wright, *Relational Mentoring*, 1-3.

<sup>44</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 85.

<sup>45</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 146-147.

<sup>46</sup> Ambrose, *A Mentor’s Companion*, 21.



a mentor to ask in the process of helping a mentoring partner discern truth.<sup>47</sup> The mentor is able then to discern the key issues and help the mentoring partner to discover the answers for him or herself. By asking questions the Holy Spirit is brought into the process and is able to guide the mentoring partner. Anderson and Reese say, “...spirituality is learning to pay attention to the presence of God in everything.”<sup>48</sup> This paying attention means listening for the voice of God, seeing things spiritually and helping mentoring partners to listen to their own lives.<sup>49</sup>

Millennials are looking for authentic loving mentors. Biehl says, “Mentoring is the relational glue (between generations)... the relational bridge connecting, strengthening, and stabilizing future generations of Christians.”<sup>50</sup> The methods we use in mentoring must be organic to be passed on to the following generations. We have looked at organic leadership and how mentoring needs to reflect authentic, organic values in the context of a healthy missional community. Frost and Hirsch give us a valuable summary:

We’ve come to the conclusion that so much of what we do in church is “inorganic.” It so often feels like an artificial experience. The communal life of many congregations doesn’t reflect the rich complexity of their everyday experiences and beliefs, struggles and triumphs. If we were organic, we would be much more sensitive to the cultural forces, the patterns and structures and energies, of the people we were trying to reach. We would think like missionaries and spend more time listening to, eating with, and playing with the subculture of our neighbourhood we were trying to minister to. We would not assume to develop a model of church/community life until we had recognized and discerned the “natural” ways in which a given group gathers and assembles. In other words, we would seek to redeem the organic, existing culture rather than impose an alien model on it.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Kreider, *Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*, 116.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 95.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 92-94.

<sup>50</sup> Biehl, *Mentoring*, 141.

<sup>51</sup> Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things*, 63.

We have examined the learning methods in the first century and in the New Testament and noticed how the family, households and mission created an environment for mentoring. We have compared the mentoring patterns seen in modern business, church, spiritual retreat and discipleship models. We have called for a more organic, gender inclusive model of mentoring, especially in the context of the missional church. We have given some practical suggestions of how we can mentor the next generation, through engagement in missional communities, and affirming values and disciplines. The organic ministry model involves the individual person and the community, with the need to give careful attention to the role of personal responsibility in the midst of the collective community. We reflect again on the three questions at the beginning of this study. Identity, authenticity and being part of the *familia Dei* help us to answer the first question: “Who are we?” Missional communities engaged in the *missio Dei* help to answer the second question: “Where are we going?” The final question of “Why are we going there?” is answered as we commit ourselves to seek the truth together.

The more our mentoring can reflect the organic process of living life, the more effective we will be in the lifelong process of investing in the next generation and leaving a legacy. Mentoring is a dynamic organic process that involves images of planting, cultivating, encouraging, sponsoring and patiently waiting, as the mentoring partner struggles with growth issues. Organic ministry creates the environment for mentoring that is engaged in God’s great adventure of sharing Himself with the world. If the Church is going through a major transformation, then the organic Church of the future must build around existing *oikos* structures and equip mature mentors who will creatively and purposefully build into the next generation.

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