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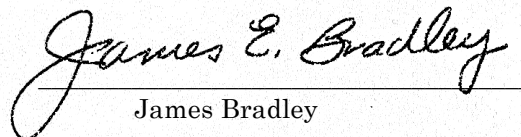
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requirements for the degree of

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MENTORING YOUNG ADULTS FOR IDENTITY FORMATION, SPIRITUAL
GROWTH AND MISSIONAL LIVING AT PEACHTREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MIRIAM NIEDNAGEL RYAN
APRIL 2015

ABSTRACT

Mentoring Young Adults for Identity Formation, Spiritual Growth and Missional Living at Peachtree Presbyterian Church

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2015

The goal of this study was to examine the unique needs of the Millennial generation in the pivotal season of life as they enter into young adulthood. This paper proposed a mentoring strategy to support young adults at Peachtree Presbyterian Church through this transitional life stage to help them discover a greater sense of personal identity, cultivate spiritual formation and embrace a desire for missional living. This program was implemented in a trial run from 2006-2009. In 2009, a more strategic mentoring ministry was developed to incorporate the lessons learned in the first attempt.

Through an examination of Scripture, this study argues that Jesus used relational methodology to teach his own disciples. Jesus established an imitative faith, calling his disciples to follow him and his way of life. In Matthew 28:19-20, he left his disciples with the on-going mission of continuing the relational pattern of disciple-making that he initiated. This study also draws from three methods of spiritual guidance in the history of the Church, spiritual direction, spiritual friendship and Christian coaching, each aimed at helping people grow spiritually and caring for their individual needs. Due to the challenges in forming natural intergenerational relationships within a mega-church, the program developed a systematic way to pair mentors with mentees for the purpose of intentional spiritual mentoring relationships.

This study concludes that one-to-one spiritual mentoring presents both many benefits and challenges. The majority of young adults who participated in the program expressed positive feedback about their mentoring experiences, and in particular those who utilized the life-planning curriculum *Storyline*, which helped them develop a sense of personal identity and grow in spiritual formation and missional living. However, further revisions to the program are needed to ensure that it will be sustainable long-term and continue to draw more young people into intentional spiritual friendships.

Content Reader: James Bradley, PhD

Words: 300

This paper is dedicated in loving memory of my Dad, Dr. Roland E. Niednagel, Jr., who modeled what it means to be a spiritual mentor and to pass the baton of faith on to the next generation. His love, encouragement and legacy of faith have left an indelible mark on my life. Although he went home to be with the Lord before I could finish this project, his support of my academic endeavors and ministry has given me the courage to persevere and finish it

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INTRODUCTION

Mary Britt is a young woman in her early twenties, a recent college graduate, with a busy career in medical device sales. Actively involved in the young adult ministry at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, but not knowing anyone in the life stage ahead of her, she asked if I could find a mentor for her, specifically a working professional woman who could help her discover a healthier work-life balance. She also had questions about her faith and a strong desire to grow spiritually, and believed she would benefit from a mentor walking alongside her in this season of life.

Whitney relocated to Atlanta right after graduating from college and had recently gone through a painful break-up. She had moved to Atlanta for this relationship and now was stuck in a new city, with a new job, few relationships and a broken heart. She wanted to find a mentor who could support her during this challenging time, but also someone with whom she could dialogue about her hopes and dreams for the future, as she sought to find a job that better aligned with her unique gifts and passions.

These conversations with Mary Britt and Whitney reminded me of when I was in my early twenties and also desired a spiritual mentor, but did not know how to find one in my church. I had heard of a local Christian ministry that had a spiritual mentoring program, which paired me with a mentor who invested in my life during the pivotal years where I was trying to discern my vocational direction, making the decision to marry my future spouse and desiring to make progress in my spiritual life. My personal interactions with young women at Peachtree confirmed that many were dealing with similar issues,

and were excited about the possibility of starting a similar program at Peachtree to help pair them with a mentor.

Sharon Parks writes about the value of mentoring relationships during the “critical years” of young adulthood, when many begin their quest to define meaning in life.¹ Young adulthood is a season where people begin to ask deeper questions about identity and purpose, questions such as: “Who am I?” “How am I unique?” “What do I have to contribute to the world?” or “What is God’s plan for my life?” Parks says that young adulthood is “rightfully a time of asking big questions and discovering worthy dreams.”² This season of meaning-making and self-discovery happens to occur at the same time when young adults are also facing important life decisions in regards to relationships, vocation and spirituality, for which they may need guidance. This pivotal season of life is wrought with transition and opportunities to make important decisions; yet for many, without the familiar structures of support present in their families of origin or college life. At Peachtree Presbyterian Church, many young adults are seeking guidance, for someone to help them navigate this season of life where they are trying to find meaning in their careers, relationships, faith and personal lives.

Recent college graduates, and those who have relocated to Atlanta seeking career possibilities, may also find themselves seeking new connections and longing for relationships where they can establish a greater sense of community. They come to church not only seeking direction, but with a felt need for connection, for new friendships

¹ Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), xii-27.

² *Ibid.*, 5.

and for a place to belong. Furthermore, this life stage may also be a time where young adults are forming their worldview, and where their faith is becoming their own.³ A mentor may be uniquely situated to help them process these issues in the context of a safe relationship, providing them with both a sense of belonging and the guidance they are seeking.

At Peachtree Presbyterian Church, young adults may find places to build community with their peers more readily, but may have a more difficult time finding older mentors who can help guide them and process life issues and faith with them. Since this “Millennial” generation,⁴ tends to have a positive view towards authority figures and mentors, and needs people who will listen to them and encourage them through this season of life, the Church should be a place that is able to provide them this support.⁵ Paradoxically, this generation also sees themselves as having something to offer previous generations. They are more open to a more mutual form of mentoring that includes dialogue, with a focus on friendship, and where the older person is also open to receive from the younger.⁶

My position as Director of Women’s Ministries and Young Adult Community, uniquely positioned me to be acquainted with women of all ages at Peachtree as I sought

³ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties,” *American Psychologist* 55:5 (May 2000): 474.

⁴ According to Neil Howe and William Strauss, “Millennials” are the generation of young people born between 1982 and 2002. See Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 41. Chapter 1 will explore various definitions and characteristics of this generation.

⁵ Patricia Hendricks, *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions: Mentoring a New Generation of Christians* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2006), 14.

⁶ David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 210-212.

to find candidates who could serve as potential mentors for the younger women who desire support. My own experience of participating in a spiritual mentoring program also provided a framework for the possibility of designing a similar program for the church. However, my work with young adults also made me aware of some of the distinct needs and characteristics of this generation. The program would need to be contextualized and adapted to meet the needs of the current “Millennials.” The purpose of this paper is to develop a mentoring strategy to support young adults at Peachtree Presbyterian Church through a transitional stage of life, and help them develop a greater sense of personal identity, cultivate spiritual formation and embrace a desire for missional living.

The first part of the paper analyzes the season of young adulthood and the unique characteristics of the current generation of young adults known as “Millennials.” Chapter 1 describes the landscape of young adulthood, including the transitional life stage immediately following adolescence known as “emerging adulthood.”⁷ Young adulthood is a season characterized by transition, along with the quest for meaning-making and self-discovery. With so many new options, choices and possibilities ahead of them, some people in their mid-twenties are experiencing a “quarter-life crisis,” the term used to describe the dramatic emotional upheaval that may occur during this season of change, identity crisis and discovery.⁸

The digital age has had a great impact on a generation of young people who have “grown up digital” and have experienced changes in technology at a rapid rate throughout

⁷ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁸ Alexandra Robbins and Abby Wilner, *Quarterlife Crisis: The Unique Challenges of Life in Your Twenties* (New York: JP Tarcher/Putnam, 2001), 4.

their lifetimes.⁹ As a result, young adults today experience more choices and options than ever before. The impact that the digital age has upon relationships and how young adults view their world will also be explored.

Chapter 2 describes the history, culture and core values of Peachtree Presbyterian Church, demonstrating that a desire to support the next generation of young people is a part of its foundation and original vision. It explores the implications of the religious culture of the Southern “Bible Belt,” and the national religious trends that show many young adults are not returning to the Church after they graduate from high school.¹⁰ Furthermore, it addresses the unique challenges and possibilities that result from ministering to a church population that can be described as largely Caucasian, upper-middle class, educated and success-driven.

Chapter 2 explains the two unique worship styles at Peachtree, each with its own values and vision for ministry, which contribute to two distinct “cultures” within the church. It demonstrates how a mentoring ministry seeks alignment with Peachtree’s mission statement and the vision of the young adult ministry at the church. It explores the current barriers to forming intergenerational relationships at Peachtree and suggests possible solutions for bridging the generational divide. It suggests ways that a mentoring strategy will benefit both the younger and older generations in the church.

Chapter 3 focuses on the biblical foundation for mentoring, which is grounded in the call to discipleship. Following Jesus’ ministry of discipleship, one can see the

⁹ Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009).

¹⁰ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 19-25.

relational approach he took to cultivating the faith development of his disciples. It analyzes the imitative nature of the Christian faith, as believers are called to imitate both the life of Christ and the lives of the saints. The imitative nature of the Christian faith is further developed in biblical passages where the older generation is instructed to be intentional about passing on the faith to the younger generation, especially to one's own children.

The Apostle Paul serves as another biblical case study of a ministry of spiritual mentoring, as he cultivates younger pastors and leaders in various churches. The personal relationships he developed amongst congregations, and his words of instruction to younger leaders, demonstrate his belief in the importance of relational ministry for spiritual growth and development. Paul's writings continue the theme of encouraging people to mentor others in the faith.

One of the most important theological foundations for spiritual mentoring is seeing the life of faith as a pilgrimage or a journey. An unintentional by-product of the Reformation mantra that salvation is by faith alone, is that some modern-day Christians have lost sight of the importance of progress and movement in the life of faith. In order to illuminate the idea that the Christian faith has historically been seen as a movement of progress and transformation, Chapter 3 will investigate some of the ancient traditions which emphasize the three-fold way of purgation, illumination and union, as well the biblical and theological emphasis on growth, change and spiritual formation. It will also explore the Reformed conception of salvation, which leads to progress in the spiritual

life. As one begins to embrace the life of faith as a journey, one also better understands the importance of how spiritual guides help people navigate this journey.

Chapter 4 surveys the history of guidance to assess what spiritual mentoring can glean from different traditions and models. It takes a close look at past and present models of spiritual direction, a form of guidance which helps one learn to pay attention to God's presence and to grow in spiritual disciplines. It gleans from two similar traditions, the Celtic soul friend and the spiritual friendship of Aelred of Rievaulx, more egalitarian and mutual forms of guidance, which emphasize relationships that foster vulnerability, accountability and spiritual growth. Third, it examines Christian coaching, a more recent approach to guidance, to investigate how some coaching strategies, such as the importance of asking good questions and encouraging goal setting, are instructive in the mentoring relationship.

Chapter 5 unfolds the strategy for creating and implementing a mentoring program at Peachtree Presbyterian Church. It gives an overview of an initial "trial run" of a smaller mentoring ministry to young adults before officially launching the Women Mentoring Women Ministry. This chapter synthesizes the lessons learned from the initial trial run and demonstrates a more effective strategy to recruit and train mentors, promote the ministry and provide on-going support to mentoring pairs. It addresses the role of the leadership team and the process by which they recruit, train and support mentoring pairs. This section also lays out a personalized approach to pair mentors and mentees together, and establishes the importance of three key events: an event to promote the ministry, an event to train mentors and a social gathering for mentors and mentees to meet together.

The leadership team model, coupled with these strategic events, creates a sustainable structure for the ministry moving forward.

Chapter 6 suggests that the format of mentoring relationships should allow for variety and flexibility. As the program is designed around the needs of the mentee, no two relationships will look exactly the same. Each pair will be given freedom to spend their time together in the way that best cultivates the objectives of the program: identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living. It will emphasize the importance of mutuality in the relationship, as the mentor should also open up her life to the mentee and be willing to receive from her.

However, within the flexible format of the program, structure and intentionality are necessary. The primary “curriculum” for pairs to explore is the life of the mentee as it unfolds. In addition to talking about the life of the mentee, some pairs may also choose to use a written curriculum. This chapter provides a variety of resources focused around the emphases of identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living.

Chapter 6 will analyze a suggested curriculum called *Storyline* by Donald Miller because it is the resource that best captures all three emphases of the program.¹¹ *Storyline* guides people through several modules in which they share their stories with one another, identify the positive and negative turns that have impacted their lives, and attempt to discover a redemptive perspective on their suffering. It is in these first three modules of sharing and understanding one’s individual story that a greater understanding of one’s identity begins to take place. Next, *Storyline* moves through a module that asks

¹¹ Donald Miller, *Storyline: Finding Your Subplot in God’s Story* (Nashville: Donald Miller Words, LLC, 2012).

them to identify the roles that they want to play in their lives, and then to choose an ambition that they have for each one of these roles. The curriculum proposes that when God's story intersects with one's own story, true meaning and purpose are discovered.

The final two purposes of the curriculum seem to work together, to pursue spiritual growth and missional living. Spiritual growth results as people move through modules which help them take active steps to become more like Jesus Christ. The exercises help them develop new habits, let go of past ways of thinking and step out in faith. Missional living takes place as Christ's followers join in on God's mission in the world. As people lean into their roles, identify God-given passions and then set goals to move towards these desires, growth and Kingdom impact will occur simultaneously.

Finally, Chapter 7 will evaluate the mentoring strategy, assessing its strengths and weaknesses. Using feedback from a survey of those involved in Women Mentoring Women as a criterion for evaluating its effectiveness, it incorporates these insights into suggestions for growth and improvement to the program as it continues. This evaluation contains a suggested model intended to establish a structure and promotional strategy that will enable the ministry to grow, with a sharper focus on adapting to the needs of the Millennial generation.

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

THE LANDSCAPE OF YOUNG ADULTHOOD

The life stage known as “young adulthood” is difficult to define with precision. There is some variance when defining the years that encompass the current generation of young adults, most commonly described as Millennials, which ranges from the years of 1977-1997¹ to 1982-2002.² William Strauss and Neil Howe’s seminal work on the generation which came of age around the year 2000 are often credited with using the moniker Millennials to describe them.³ Don Tapscott coined them the “Net Generation,” highlighting the impact of the rise of the internet and the digital age upon this generation.⁴ Other generational research has categorized those born in the 1980s and

¹ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 16.

² Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 41.

³ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 31.

⁴ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 9.

1990s as Generation Y, Generation Next and the iGeneration, emphasizing their connection to iPods, iPhones and other digital devices.⁵

Parks highlights the ambiguous nature of determining when one becomes an adult and the season that describes the transition into adulthood.⁶ Traditional marks of entering the world of adulthood have been events like going off to college, finding a job, getting married, having a child or becoming financially independent.⁷ For many Millennials, these defining events do not happen as consistently as they did in previous generations, but rather there is a wide range of variation from individual to individual. Furthermore, many of these events are happening later in life than they did in previous generations. For example, the average age for a first time marriage increased from 26.3 for men and 24.1 for women in 1991 to 28.7 for men and 26.5 for women in 2011.⁸ Arnett highlights the stark differences between of a twenty-one year old woman in 1970 from a young woman today. In 1970, a twenty-one year old woman was typically married, expecting a child, almost finished with her education and perhaps settling into a new job or full-time motherhood.⁹ Today, a twenty-one year old woman is typically five years or more away from marriage, without children, and may be considering graduate work or trying out

⁵ Ron Alsop, *The Trophy Kids Grow Up: How the Millennial Generation is Shaking Up the Workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), vi.

⁶ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 4-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-13.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, "Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to the Present," U.S. Census Bureau, November 2011, www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls (accessed April 27, 2014).

⁹ Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 3.

different career options.¹⁰ Today, defining the adult life stage by these ambiguous markers is problematic.

Parks argues that instead of defining adulthood by one's situation in life, adulthood lies in the cognitive development of the "birth of critical awareness and the dissolution and recomposition of the meaning of self, other, world, and 'God'."¹¹ It is difficult to limit this cognitive stage of development to a specific age-range, but for many this stage of development begins as one becomes "college-aged."¹² Park's definition of adulthood as a stage of cognitive development removes the tendency to define a young adult simply by age.

Other research seeking to define the life stages of young people focuses more on age categories. Arnett identifies an additional life stage that he calls "emerging adulthood" which occurs roughly between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.¹³ He believes that this stage is distinct from "young adulthood" which usually begins in one's mid- to late-twenties. While the ages suggested are by no means absolute, research suggests that emerging adulthood is a time characterized by more flux, exploration and experimentation.¹⁴ In particular, emerging adults are experimenting in both the relational

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹¹ Parks, *Big Questions*, 5.

¹² Acknowledging that people attend college in all walks of life, the term "college-aged," in this case, refers to those who attend college immediately following high school.

¹³ Arnett, "Emerging Adulthood," 469.

¹⁴ Pamela E. King, "Emerging Adulthood and Young Adulthood: The Solidifying of the Reciprocating Self" in Jack O. Balswick, Pamela E. King and Kevin Reimer, eds. *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 185-186.

and vocational arenas of their lives.¹⁵ The emerging adult demographic includes a rather diverse, unpredictable grouping of people—those who live with their parents, those who cohabitate, those who travel, those who continue their education and those who pursue careers.¹⁶ It is also a time in life when they are engaging in more risk taking and self-discovery.¹⁷ While Erik Erikson’s developmental research defines the adolescent years as the time when one navigates the crisis of identity versus role confusion, in many cases this struggle is continuing past adolescence into the twenties, and sometimes beyond.¹⁸ Emerging adulthood therefore has some similar characteristics to adolescence, yet is a distinct life stage, filled with transition and identity exploration.

Pamela King says that young adulthood, which follows emerging adulthood, on the other hand, is characterized by more stability.¹⁹ In this stage, one may have already chosen a life partner or a career, and may even have begun to have children. However, even those classified as young adults, who have experienced many of these transitions, still may not consider themselves to be adults. Arnett’s research suggests that from the perspective of the young adult, it not reaching these milestones that makes her feel like an adult, but rather the following: learning to accept responsibility for one’s self, making

¹⁵ Ibid., 191.

¹⁶ Ibid., 187.

¹⁷ Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood,” 473-475.

¹⁸ Ibid., 473.

¹⁹ King, “Emerging Adulthood and Young Adulthood,” 189.

independent decisions and becoming financially independent.²⁰ Therefore, both emerging and young adults may still perceive themselves in need of extra guidance as they navigate the waves of change into adulthood.

This paper will use the terms “young adult” and “young adulthood” to encompass both emerging and young adult Millennials and will examine the factors that have shaped this generation and some of their unique characteristics.²¹ Research demonstrates that when a person was born may affect his personality more than his family of origin.²² The Millennial generation has been raised in a culture marked by innovation in technology that has had a great impact upon them. For the most part, they have been raised in an atmosphere that has catered to them, celebrated them, and left them feeling confident at best and entitled at worst. Generational studies draw out the best characteristics of this generation and its potential to make an impact upon the world; yet at the same time, they show some of the challenges this generation faces and the detrimental aspects of their generational identity, for which they may need guidance and support. The purpose of Chapter 1 is to describe the landscape of the current generation of young adults and to demonstrate how they could benefit from mentors walking alongside them during this formative and challenging season of life.

²⁰ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Conceptions of the Transition to Adulthood: Perspectives from Adolescence to Midlife,” *Journal of Adult Development* 8:2 (April 2001): 133–143.

²¹ For the purposes of pastoral care, Peachtree Presbyterian Church identifies “young adults” as single individuals or married couples between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-five without children. While I agree with the research done by Arnett that emerging adulthood is indeed a separate life stage from young adulthood, for the purposes of implementing a mentoring program to the demographic to whom I minister, I have decided to use the term young adult to encompass both emerging adults as well as those in their late-twenties and early-thirties. I acknowledge that not all characteristics used to describe emerging adults may apply to the older contingent in the ministry.

²² Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 3.

The Impact of the Digital Age

One of the most significant factors shaping the landscape of young adulthood is the impact of the digital age. As the title of Don Tapscott's book on the Millennial generation suggests, young adults are the first generation of people to have "grown up digital."²³ This generation, raised with access to computers, cell phones, iPods and tablets, has been exposed to technology to such an extent that it is even said to be part of their generational self-identity.²⁴ Tapscott calls them the Net Generation, noting that during their life time not only have they had access to the internet in their schools, but statistics show that there is one computer for every four school-aged child in America.²⁵ Natives to the digital world, they are often the earliest adopters of the latest technologies.

One way that immersion in digital technology has affected Millennials is in the area of self-perception. According to Howe and Strauss, this is a generation of children who were raised feeling wanted and protected, and who have received special attention growing up.²⁶ Not only have they come from families who have catered to their needs, but pop culture and the media has also made them a primary target. They have been raised in an era where even television programs and advertisements are aimed at reaching them. By 1999, as many as 1,324 kids' programs appeared on twenty-nine channels on a

²³ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 2.

²⁴ Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 41.

²⁵ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 17. Tapscott references statistics in "Internet Access in U.S. Public Schools and Classrooms: 1994-2005," U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007.

²⁶ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 32-33; 43-44.

weekly basis.²⁷ They are a media-saturated generation, who are used to being entertained and engaged. Even schools have picked up on the need to use movies and multi-media as educating tools, as this has been a primary way to gain their attention.

In addition to being raised in a society where digital technology and media caters towards them, the digital age has brought with it, an environment where continuous change is the norm. No previous generation has lived through cultural changes so profound and fast-paced.²⁸ David Kinnaman states, “Today’s Mosaics [Millennials] are being formed under the direct influence of the fast-paced changes. Their expectations, values, behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations are being shaped in and by this context.”²⁹

The variables of constant flux and innovation have dramatically effected a generation who has been immersed in them throughout their most formative years. Innovation in technology has opened up a “bottomless source of information and entertainment.”³⁰ At their fingertips, young people can access people, ideas and information around the world through the internet. As emerging adulthood is often the season when most of one’s identity exploration takes place, the input from exposure to so many diverse ideas and influences has a deep impact upon this generation.³¹ The worldview of many young adults is shaped by their broad exposure to diverse ideas and

²⁷ Ibid., 250.

²⁸ Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 38.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Pew Research Center, “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next,” Pew Research Center, February 2010, 25, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf> (accessed April 17, 2014).

³¹ Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood,” 473.

input. Throughout their twenties, as they are exploring their identity and forming their own worldview, they are in a process of discovery and may make many modifications to their worldview during this season.³² It is not surprising, with the access to so much varying input, that one of the characteristics that Millennials say makes their generation unique is that they are “liberal and tolerant.”³³ As emerging adulthood is characterized as a season of exploration and experimentation, the internet provides limitless exposure to new ideas and new information in this quest of discovery.³⁴

Parks’ research on the quest for meaning-making in the young adult years has implications for the topic of spiritual mentoring as she defines the categories in which young adults are specifically seeking to find meaning: how one views herself, others, the world and God, which may be subjects that a mentor can help a young person process in their time together.³⁵ As young adults are searching and forming their worldviews, and being exposed to so much new input, it may be helpful to have a mentor to dialogue with as they process and interact with new ideas and information. Particularly for young adults who desire to use their faith to help them navigate their forming worldview, a discerning mentor could be invaluable.

The digital age has also impacted the way that young adults relate and communicate with one another. More than any other previous generation, Millennials are naturals at communicating through mediated technology. Kinnaman calls their

³² Ibid., 474.

³³ Pew Research Center, “*Millennials*,” 13.

³⁴ Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood,” 473-475.

³⁵ Parks, *Big Questions*, 5-12.

relationship with digital media “symbiotic.”³⁶ Although Millennials are highly relational, they are often choosing to maintain relationships through texting, social networking and a variety of mediated forms of communication. Multi-tasking is another result of this generation’s dual propensity towards relationships and technology. It is common to see groups of young adults hanging out together, while simultaneously texting or scrolling through their newsfeed on their phones.

Linda Stone coined the term “continuous partial attention” to describe the phenomenon that is taking place as young people are attempting stay connected to multiple forms of media or technology while going about other tasks.³⁷ She makes a distinction between “continuous partial attention” and multi-tasking saying,

Continuous partial attention and multi-tasking are two different attention strategies, motivated by different impulses. When we multi-task, we are motivated by a desire to be more productive and more efficient . . . In the case of continuous partial attention, we’re motivated by a desire not to miss anything. There’s a kind of vigilance that is not characteristic of multi-tasking.³⁸

Stone observes some of the detrimental effects that “continuous partial attention” is having on people’s emotional and physical health, and claims it leads to a variety of problems such as over-stimulation, lack of fulfillment, powerlessness and even to attention and stress-related diseases.³⁹ Other research points to the detrimental effects of multi-tasking, especially while completing more complex tasks, because it causes a

³⁶ Ibid., 41.

³⁷ Linda Stone, “Continuous Partial Attention—Not the Same as Multi-tasking” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, http://www.businessweek.com/business_at_work/time_management/archives/2008/07/continuous_part.html (accessed August 20, 2009).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

person to be more fatigued, more likely to make mistakes, and to take longer to finish tasks.⁴⁰ Multi-tasking, and tasks that are interrupted by email messages or media, also minimizes the potential for deeper thought, analysis, and creative thinking.⁴¹

Yet, multi-tasking is a norm in the landscape of young adulthood. Tapscott says that “media multitasking is a quintessential characteristic of the Net Generation brain.”⁴² However, Millennials point to some of the positive implications of their lifestyle habit. In the workplace, it may allow them to fill in a gap with something productive when they are waiting for a document to download or print, a process that is called “layering,” since they are adding a new task to something else that is already in progress.⁴³ It also adds an element of fun to the workday as it allows for short, entertaining diversions.⁴⁴ Multi-tasking is almost second nature to young people who are accustomed to doing everything with a digital device in hand, and have a desire for constant connection with their peers. This leads to the question, what is the relational impact of the digital age upon the landscape of young adulthood?

While Stone’s research links divided attention and too much stimulus to increased stress and decreased productivity, she poses a question about whether social networking might have a similar effect on relationships saying, “Are social networks continuous

⁴⁰ Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman, *The M-Factor: How the Millennial Generation is Rocking the Workplace* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2010), 174.

⁴¹ Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital*, 109.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴³ Lancaster and Stillman, *The M-Factor*, 176.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

partial friendships?”⁴⁵ Social networks such as Facebook are redefining the connotation of the word “friend,” as people on these sites usually have hundreds, perhaps even thousands of “friends.” The sheer proliferation of the number of connections one has necessarily changed the nature of such “friendships,” making it impossible to maintain deep, personal relationships with all of them. The term “hyperconnectivity” refers to the phenomenon that many young people today are experiencing as they begin to feel the stress and overload of trying to keep up superficial relationships with an abundance of people, often without experiencing deep friendship with any of them.⁴⁶

Research demonstrates that the rise of technology has also been associated with an increase in individualism in the United States.⁴⁷ In particular, social media platforms and other electronic forms of communication seem to contribute to this phenomenon.

Lynne Babb notes that one effect of social media is that it gives friendships “consumeristic components” as people have the open access to “consume” other people’s feelings, thoughts and photographs.⁴⁸ She says, “Electronic communication can contribute to relationships becoming individualistic, compartmentalized transactions. If we care about healthy friendships, this danger must be addressed.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Linda Stone, “Continuous Partial Everything,” Linda Stone (blog) <http://www.lindastone.net/qa> (accessed August 20, 2009).

⁴⁶ Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected Are Redefining Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), 101.

⁴⁷ Studies cited in Adriana M. Manago, Tamara Taylor, and Patricia M. Greenfield, “Me and My 400 Friends: The Anatomy of College Students’ Facebook Networks, Their Communication Patterns, and Well-Being,” *Developmental Psychology* 48:2 (March 2012): 371.

⁴⁸ Lynne Babb, *Friending: Real Relationships in a Virtual World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

Social networking sites may also be changing the way that young adults experience a sense of intimacy in friendships. The most common reason that young adults “update their status” on Facebook is for emotional disclosure, which is shown to be a key feature in intimacy.⁵⁰ While for previous generations emotional disclosure was typically reserved for private conversations between close friends, another significant finding in a study on the use of Facebook is that conversations amongst close friends are now happening in a public forum: “Expressing one’s current emotional state dominated use of Facebook’s status-update tool, a feature for broadcasting oneself to one’s entire network, usually numbering in the hundreds. This finding indicates that self-disclosure, a hallmark of intimacy, has gone public, transforming the nature of intimacy development for emerging adults.”⁵¹

Although many young adults perceive Facebook as providing them with high levels of social support, it is yet to be determined if this “perception” of support is enough to sustain them through the season of early adulthood.⁵² Since the median number of Facebook “friends” for those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine is three hundred, this paper proposes that using this platform as one’s primary forum for emotional disclosure may not provide the same level of emotional support that could come through being vulnerable within a trusted, interpersonal relationship.⁵³ This paper argues that young adults will benefit from learning to share and be vulnerable with a

⁵⁰ Manago, Taylor and Greenfield, “Me and My 400 Friends,” 374.

⁵¹ Ibid., 375-378.

⁵² Ibid., 379.

⁵³ Aaron Smith, “Six New Facts about Facebook,” Pew Research Center, February 23, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/03/6-new-facts-about-facebook/> (accessed April 27, 2014).

mentor, who has the wisdom of life experience to speak into their lives, and who is invested in supporting them on their journey of self-discovery.

Identity Formation and Meaning-Making

Arnett identifies emerging adulthood as the season of life with the most opportunities for identity exploration, typically in the areas of love, work and worldviews.⁵⁴ Part of this quest to discover identity includes exploration and experimentation, trying new things and being exposed to new ideas, while at the same time trying to discover one's sense of self. One area where a vast amount of soul-searching and self-discovery occurs is in trying to identify one's vocation or greater purpose in life. For some, the quest is one in the same—finding a vocation where she can use her gifts and abilities and make a contribution that is meaningful. Kinnaman critiques the Church as missing an opportunity to help young adults “connect these vocational dreams deeply with their faith in Christ.”⁵⁵ In the landscape of young adulthood, many young Christians see a bifurcation between their faith and work-life and may need guidance to see how the two connect.

While college is often a season when one begins to prepare for a future career, emerging adults continue to discover their vocation and explore identity issues post-college, asking questions such as: “‘What kind of work am I good at?’ ‘What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long term?’ or ‘What are my chances of getting a job

⁵⁴ Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood,” 473.

⁵⁵ Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 29.

in the field that seems to suit me best?”⁵⁶ For some, this season of exploration is wrought with anxiety and struggle, as the task to discover one’s purpose and vocation can be overwhelming. While the decision to discover one’s vocation has likely been difficult across the generations, the digital age has only enlarged the number of possibilities and exposures from which young people now have to choose. In this time of self-discovery, young people often need support and encouragement to pursue their goals and dreams.

Alexandra Robbins and Abby Wilner paint young adulthood in darker terms using the phrase “quarter-life crisis” to describe the situation that many “twentysomethings” face: “The transition from childhood to adulthood—from school to the world beyond—comes as a jolt for which many of today’s twentysomethings simply are not prepared. The resulting overwhelming senses of helplessness and cluelessness, of indecision and apprehension, make up the real and common experience we call the quarter life crisis.”⁵⁷

Although recent academic research questions the existence of a “quarter life crisis,” there is no denying that this season of life is filled with opportunities to make important decisions.⁵⁸ When adults look back on the most significant events of their lives, they often reflect on this season.⁵⁹ Even Nicole Rossi and Carolyn Mebert, whose findings deny the existence of a quarter-life crisis, admit that young adults do exhibit stress and

⁵⁶ Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood,” 474.

⁵⁷ Robbins and Wilner, *Quarterlife Crisis*, 4.

⁵⁸ Nicole Rossi and Carolyn Mebert, “Does a Quarterlife Crisis Exist?” *Journal of Genetic Psychology* 172:2 (2011), 141-161.

⁵⁹ As cited in Arnett, “Emerging Adulthood,” 469.

anxiety with the transition that comes from college to the workplace.⁶⁰ The point of their research is to demonstrate that the anxiety that young adults experience during the quarter life is typical of the stress that comes with any major transition across one's lifespan, and it is not something that happens simply because one is in the quarter-life stage of life.⁶¹ Given the importance of life decisions that young people are facing, from potentially discovering their life partner, to seeking their future vocation and sense of purpose in life, to deciding what they believe in the area of religion, it seems that the added support of a mentor during this time could enhance their ability to discern what is best and ease their anxiety as they make important decisions.

Park's research indicates that young adulthood is characterized by a search for meaning, purpose and faith.⁶² She highlights the problematic nature of equating faith with religion in a religiously pluralistic world, and instead focuses on faith as a form of meaning-making.⁶³ However, her research indicates that this season of life is indeed wrought with opportunities for introspection and discovery in the areas of finding a deeper sense of meaning in life.

However, in this quest for deeper meaning, young adults may be seeking this sense of purpose in new ways, perhaps independent of their religious up-bringing. Barna research shows that 59 percent of Millennials who grew up in a Christian church walk

⁶⁰ Rossi and Mebert, "Does a Quarterlife Crisis Exist?" 154-155.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Parks, *Big Questions*. These characteristics are addressed throughout the book and named the book's subtitle: *Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*.

⁶³ Parks, *Big Questions*, 14-20.

away from their faith or the church in the first decade of their adult life.⁶⁴ Other studies show that one of the determining factors as to whether teens will return to church following graduation from high school is if they had a close relationship with an adult other than their parent within the church.⁶⁵

There seem to be a variety of factors that church “drop outs” claim had an impact on their departure: 36 percent say they were “not able to ask their most pressing life questions in church,”⁶⁶ and 24 percent believe that “faith is not relevant to my career or interests.”⁶⁷ Kinnaman also describes six important themes that emerge from his research on this generation’s disconnection from the church after the age of fifteen: churches seem over protective; teens’ and twentysomethings’ experience of Christianity is shallow; churches come across as antagonistic to science; young Christians’ church experiences related to sexuality are often simplistic and judgmental; and they wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity and the church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.⁶⁸

While these sweeping critiques of the Millennials’ experience of the Church today may not be easily solved, they provide food for thought as to how churches can begin to address some of the issues that are driving young people away. At first glance, many of

⁶⁴ Barna Group, “Five Reasons Millennials Stay Connected to Church,” Barna: Millennials, September 17, 2013, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/millennials/635-5-reasons-millennials-stay-connected-to-church#.UyN11E18PIU> (accessed March 14, 2014).

⁶⁵ Kara Powell, Brad Griffin, and Cheryl Crawford, *Sticky Faith: Youth Worker Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 72.

⁶⁶ Barna Group, “Six Reasons Young Christians Leave Church,” Barna Group, September 28, 2011, <https://www.barna.org/teens-next-gen-articles/528-six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church> (accessed March 14, 2014).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

these critiques seem to be pointed towards beliefs: the overprotective nature of the Church is often described by young people as their views towards secular media and the way they “demonize everything outside of the church.”⁶⁹ Beliefs about science, sexuality, and the exclusive claims of Christianity are also included in the list. However, it appears that it is often a deeper attitude and approach to the traditional beliefs that cause young people to feel alienated from the Church. Words like “simplistic,” “judgmental,” “antagonistic” and “unfriendly towards those who doubt,” point to an approach that is driving young people away.

The purpose of this paper is not to solve the problem of the Millennials’ drop off from the Church. This multifaceted problem needs a far more comprehensive approach. Many of the movements to address the problem are beginning in the earlier life stages, addressing the need for intergenerational connections in youth ministry and intentionality in parenting. Pastors and teachers in the Church may need to consider new and thoughtful approaches to address the issues related to science, sexuality and the exclusive claims of Christ in a way that acknowledges their complexity and recognizes the struggles of those who doubt.

Instead, the concern of this paper seeks to address, given the current state of the young adult generation in the Church today, where young adults who are a product of their generation, and who may wrestle with similar issues as those who may no longer attend church, how can the Church take their struggles seriously? In order to meet the needs of the next generation, the Church needs to consider ways they might offer young people relational support and a safe place to ask questions, express their doubts, clarify

⁶⁹ Ibid.

their beliefs, understand their identity and discover a greater sense of purpose. This paper proposes an intentional mentoring relationship may be the best avenue to offer this support.

One of the most significant findings in recent research about the longevity of faith is the impact of adult mentors upon the lives of young people. Contact with adults in the church inside and outside the youth ministry in the teen years has shown a correlation with stronger faith for up to three years after high school graduation.⁷⁰ Youth ministries are beginning to understand the importance of intergenerational connections in the church in order to better prepare students to carry their faith into their college years and beyond. However, once these same “students” graduate and move into emerging adulthood, they are often left to navigate this season without the support adult mentors. Perhaps a similar approach that is helping teens build a stronger foundation for their faith, through forming a relationship with an adult in the church, will continue to benefit young adults through their own season of self-discovery and meaning-making. This paper seeks to develop a mentoring strategy in the church to provide an intentional support system and discipleship strategy for young adults as they transition into adulthood.

Characteristics of the Millennial Generation

A unique characteristic of Millennials is that they tend to have a more positive view towards authority figures than previous generations.⁷¹ Ron Alsop says that Millennials tend to remain closer to their parents into adulthood and have closer

⁷⁰ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith*, 78.

⁷¹ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 8.

relationships with older adults than earlier generations.⁷² A Pew Research Center Study concluded that the majority of Millennials get along well with their parents and report fewer conflicts with their parents in the teen year than their parents described about their own teen years.⁷³ The same study showed that the vast majority of Millennials respect their elders and believe that older generations are superior to theirs in moral values and work ethic.⁷⁴ Their sense of admiration for previous generations and openness to learn from them demonstrate why Millennials are more open to having adults serve as mentors in their lives.⁷⁵

Millennials possess a host of positive characteristics that appear to be unique to their generation. In contrast with the Boomers and Gen Xer's who precede them, optimism is a characteristic that defines Millennials.⁷⁶ Ninety percent of Millennials describe themselves as "happy," "confident" and "positive."⁷⁷ This positivity is carried out into school environments, where students are motivated to achieve academic success and to "be smart." Howe and Strauss note that the majority of students say they "look forward to school" and "plan to attend college."⁷⁸

⁷² Alsop, *Trophy Kids*, 13.

⁷³ Pew Research Center, "Millennials," 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Hendricks, *Hungry Souls, Holy Companions*, 14.

⁷⁶ Daniel Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials: Shaping the Next Generation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003), 32.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 9-10.

Their positive attitudes also motivate Millennials towards voluntarism and activism. They truly believe that they can change the world and are often passionate about diving into social causes that bring about change. According to Strauss and Howe's generational theory, there are four repeating generational types: idealist, reactive, civic and adaptive.⁷⁹ Millennials are labeled as a civic generation, akin to the G.I. generation born between 1901 and 1924.⁸⁰ The G.I. Generation was also characterized by their "upbeat, team-playing" nature, and therefore was able to rise up to lead their country through the national crisis of World War II.⁸¹ Howe and Strauss propose that civic generations may have the capability to "successfully shoulder a secular crisis."⁸²

The civic-minded ethos of this generation often leads Millennials to be active in community service. Daniel Egeler says that this service ethic is "built around notions of teamwork, support for civic institutions, and participation in good deeds."⁸³ Strauss and Howe note that Millennial teens spend more hours doing community service than middle-aged Boomers.⁸⁴

Other generational theorists, such as Tim Elmore, note some differences between younger and older Millennials. Elmore divides the Millennial generations into two segments: those born between 1984 and 1990 and those born after 1990, noting that the

⁷⁹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 84, 335-343.

⁸¹ Holly C. Allen and Christine L. Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2012), 146.

⁸² Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 361.

⁸³ Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 37.

⁸⁴ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 215.

older Millennials tend to be more civic-minded and self-sacrificing.⁸⁵ Elmore also describes the paradoxical nature of Millennials being described as both self-absorbed and also generous.⁸⁶ Elmore notes the need for intergenerational connections and mentoring by older adults in order for Millennials to develop a greater sense of empathy.⁸⁷

Despite these positive characteristics, Millennials are sometimes portrayed in a negative light, being labeled entitled and narcissistic. The workplace is one of the primary arenas in which these negative tendencies are highlighted by other generations. Millennials may expect higher salaries, promotions, and perks such as work flexibility more readily than other generations.⁸⁸ Their perceived arrogance, lack of work ethic and high expectations for recognition can cause divisions in the workplace.

The title of Jeanne Twenge's book *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled and More Miserable than Ever Before* draws attention to some of the most of the negative characteristics of the Millennial generation. Twenge's work focuses on the way the self-esteem movement of the 1980s and 1990s has shaped the current generation to see themselves in an overly positive light and ultimately to learn to put themselves first.⁸⁹ One way in which this emphasis manifests itself is in a generation of young people who have difficulty accepting

⁸⁵ Tim Elmore, *Generation iY: Our Last Chance to Save Their Future* (Atlanta: Poet Gardener Publishing, 2010), 13.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 69.

⁸⁸ Twenge, *Generation Me*, 216-217.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 44-71.

criticism.⁹⁰ Being immersed in a culture that tells them “you are special” and surrounds them with praise and unconditional validation has created an inflated sense of self that is often difficult to challenge.⁹¹ Alsop calls this generation the “trophy kids,” the pride and joy of their parents, who have been given constant praise for their achievements, and sometimes for no reason at all.⁹² As a result of only hearing positive feedback about themselves for most of their lives, it is often a challenge for Millennials to learn to take constructive feedback.

Twenge goes so far as to say that the self-esteem movement has produced not only a generation of people with inflated egos, but “an army of little narcissists.”⁹³ Twenge’s research, utilizing the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, indicates that the current generation of young people is significantly more narcissistic than previous generations.⁹⁴ Their research found that “the average college student in 2006 scored higher in narcissism than 65 percent of students just nineteen years before in 1987.”⁹⁵

Along with an inflated sense of self-importance, the self-esteem movement has often encouraged this generation to believe that they can become anything they desire to be. While during childhood Millennials often exhibit optimism, as they rise into adulthood they may express disappointment, as their high expectations begin to collide

⁹⁰ Ibid., 68.

⁹¹ Ibid., 53-57.

⁹² Alsop, *The Trophy Kids*, 3.

⁹³ Twenge, *Generation Me*, 223.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

with reality.⁹⁶ These high expectations for themselves and what they believe they can achieve often lands this generation with the label of being “entitled.”⁹⁷ In contrast to Howe and Strauss’s study on Millennials which labeled them as confident and showed high levels of reported happiness as teenagers,⁹⁸ as they enter the workplace and discover the discrepancy between their current reality and their high expectations, this may result in “a lot of anxiety, depression and complaining.”⁹⁹

An analysis of the landscape of young adulthood illuminates some of the promise and potential, as well as the pitfalls and deficiencies of the Millennial generation. This optimistic, technology-savvy, civic-minded and relational generation of people has much to offer the Church and the world. Though they have much to give, they may also benefit from mentors who will help them along their journey to self-discovery, championing them on to live out their unique calling in this world. A spiritual mentor may also become a safe harbor for them, as they seek a place to belong and become. Recognizing that this generation of young people has been shaped by the digital age also poses a plethora of challenges: constant exposure to new information and change, divided attention, engagement of relationships through mediated technology and a way of doing life that is more fragmented, distracted and secular than ever before. A mentor who is aware of the negative influences upon this generation may also guide and re-direct them on their journey to adulthood. The next generation is the future of the Church, and just

⁹⁶ Ibid., 213

⁹⁷ Alsop, *The Trophy Kids*, 24.

⁹⁸ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 178.

⁹⁹ Twenge, *Generation Me*, 213.

like every previous generation, it is a shaped by the world in which they live. The theological imperative of passing on the faith to the next generation will continue to be important throughout the generations, but perhaps the present Millennial generation is uniquely ready to receive from spiritual mentors, with their openness to link arms with and learn from those who have gone before them.

CHAPTER 2

DESCRIPTION AND CULTURE OF PEACHTREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Peachtree Presbyterian Church is a church with over one hundred years of history. The church's birth grew out of a young couple's vision to begin a mission Sunday school in memory of their infant child. In 1910, as Mr. and Mrs. C.S. Honour were on the way home from their three-month old son's funeral, they felt called to begin a mission Sunday school for children in their local neighborhood, in memory of their son. Since most of the churches in Atlanta were a long carriage or trolley ride away from their neighborhood, they proposed the idea of a mission Sunday school in the Buckhead area. Their proposal was approved by the Session of First Presbyterian Church, along with the Session of North Avenue Presbyterian Church.¹ The Sunday school program began with forty-eight children in attendance and by 1919, Frederick D. Stevenson was commissioned by the Atlanta Presbytery to study the community to determine if there was enough interest to begin a new Presbyterian Church in Buckhead.² On November 2, 1919, the Peachtree

¹ Laura Poe, *Peachtree Presbyterian Church 100 Years Centennial History* (Atlanta: privately printed, 2010), 18.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

Road Presbyterian Church was planted with eighty-two charter members and Stevenson as their first pastor.³

The heart and vision of its original founders, to disciple and pass on the faith to the next generation, has stayed central to the focus of the church today. This passion is expressed by its commitment to discipleship programs for children, students and young adults within the church, a contemporary worship service with a style that reflects a younger generation and an investment in new facilities for the younger demographic. Aware of the trend in the American mainline Protestant church, where congregations are losing their younger members, the church is intentional about the value of reaching the next generation.

On August 1, 2000, Vic Pentz began his tenure as the senior pastor of Peachtree Presbyterian Church. After completing a “state of the church” assessment, a new vision statement for the church was drafted which included an emphasis on more variation in worship style.⁴ In a church newsletter in 2002, Pentz wrote, “One of the first pleas I heard from younger members was for one of our three services to reflect a different style with which their generation and unchurched persons might more readily engage.”⁵ Continuing the tradition of a commitment to meet the needs of the next generation, a contemporary worship service was begun on June 16, 2002.⁶

³ Ibid., 24.

⁴ Ibid., 240.

⁵ Ibid., 263.

⁶ Ibid.

In 2006, urging the congregation to make an investment in the next generation, Dr. Pentz initiated a capitol campaign, for the construction of a 47,000 square foot student and Young Christian's Center, which became known as "The Lodge," across the street from the main church building.⁷ The building was constructed with the aim of providing a unique space for teens and young adults to convene for classes, events and small groups. In addition, a coffeehouse was opened, with the desire to provide a "third space" atmosphere, where students might spend time hanging out after school, or young adults might gather with friends. In September 2009, the 11:05 a.m. contemporary service moved from the gymnasium into the Lodge building.

The contemporary service has grown under the leadership of teaching pastor, Bryan Dunagan, and when the worship space reached maximum capacity at around six hundred in attendance, the decision was made to begin a second contemporary service at 8:45a.m. At this time, contemporary worship at Peachtree was named "The Summit," and traditional worship became identified as "The Sanctuary" to further clarify the two locations and unique worship styles.

Set in the South, the church experiences both the benefits and the challenges that come from the cultural context of the "Bible Belt" which is generally more open to the Christian faith and to church. Barna Research shows that Southerners tend to attend church, read their Bibles, pray and volunteer more often than people in any other region in America.⁸ A Gallop poll in 2012 indicated that the state of Georgia ranks ninth overall

⁷ Ibid., 269.

⁸ Barna Group, "Regional Differences," Barna Group, <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=32> (accessed March 15, 2006).

of people who consider themselves to be “very religious,” with nearly half of those surveyed responding in the affirmative.⁹ The popularity of religion in the South leads to an atmosphere where Christianity is largely an accepted part of the culture.

The general attitude in the community towards the church is generally positive and congenial. This spirit of openness to the institutional church makes missional efforts by churches and outreach into the community more readily received. Yet while the church in the Southern states of America tends to have more traction than other regions of the country, like most regions in America, it is experiencing decline rather than growth. Over the past twenty years, the percentage of unchurched people in the South, defined as those who have not attended church in the past six months other than for a wedding or funeral, has risen from twenty to thirty-one per cent.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, Millennials represent the largest demographic of unchurched people.¹¹

“Cultural Christianity,” another phenomenon prevalent in churches in the South, also affects the members of Peachtree Presbyterian Church. A downside to this phenomenon is that some young adults who were raised in a culture where going to church was seen as something that “good people” do, may continue attending church without considering it to be very important to their lives. They may view church

⁹ Frank Newport, “Mississippi is the Most Religious State,” Gallup, March 27, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153479/Mississippi-Religious-State.aspx?version=print> (accessed May 28, 2014).

¹⁰ Barna Group, “Regional Shifts in Religious Beliefs and Behavior Since 1991 Revealed in New Barna Report,” Barna Group, August 3, 2011, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/faith-spirituality/512-regional-shifts-in-religious-beliefs-and-behavior-since-1991-revealed-in-new-barna-report#.Uym35E18PIV>; (accessed March 19, 2014).

¹¹ Barna Group, “Five Trends among the Unchurched,” Barna Group, https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/685-five-trends-among-the-unchurched#.VOeWs_nF9S0 (accessed February 20, 2015).

membership as similar to joining another civic organization. Their church experiences may not be very personal or life-changing, as many cultural Christians attend church sporadically, or perhaps only on major holidays. Cultural Christians may not have strong convictions about what they believe, nor feel the need to align themselves with the church when it comes to doctrinal beliefs or lifestyle choices. However, some young adults who were raised as cultural Christians are drawn back to the church through a desire for relationships, or simply out of a sense of duty.

A challenge in ministering to the cultural Christian at Peachtree is that this person usually identifies herself as a Christian, sometimes without the understanding that a Christian is one who enters into a transformational relationship with God. A cultural Christian may see church attendance or affiliation as what defines the term “Christian.” In ministering to these individuals, when asked to describe their “faith journey” they speak of their church affiliation rather than of a relationship with Christ. Many cannot define a moment in their faith journey where they accepted Christ, or when their faith became real to them, and they may define their faith as a “religion” as opposed to a “relationship.”¹² As Peachtree seeks to engage Millennials who are products of cultural Christianity, an intentional mentoring ministry may provide a safe place for those who are returning to the church after college to begin to explore and experience a deeper connection with their faith.

Peachtree Presbyterian Church is located in a Buckhead, a community in Atlanta that is defined by the Pew Research Center as “upper income,” as opposed to the

¹² These observations about “cultural Christianity” have been made by this author in numerous conversations over a ten year period of ministering to the members of Peachtree Presbyterian Church.

designations of “middle or mixed income” or “lower income.”¹³ The majority of those who attend the church are predominantly white, upper-middle class people, whose homes, luxury cars and lifestyles reflect their economic status and success-oriented natures. Many are highly educated, often with graduate degrees. High school students at Peachtree attend some of the most prestigious preparatory schools in the city, with annual tuitions as high as \$24, 435, going to some of the nation’s finest universities.¹⁴ Many of these students return home to Atlanta following their college education seeking employment. Atlanta is home to many large corporations and draws recent college graduates seeking careers. Forbes ranks Atlanta as number twenty-two out of two-hundred “Best Places for Business and Careers” and is home for the headquarters of Coca Cola, Home Depot, UPS, Delta Airlines and Turner Broadcasting, where many Peachtree members work.¹⁵

The lure of success and temptation towards materialism are real issues that congregants of Peachtree face. Furthermore, students and young adults may find themselves struggling with the pressure to achieve a similar level of success or to attain the lavish lifestyles of their parents, even at a young age. As a result, young adults at Peachtree, with high expectations for their lives following college, may experience the disappointment of their current lives not living up to their aspirations. Some may even

¹³ Pew Research Center, “Residential Segregation by Income: Atlanta,” Pew Research Center, August, 1, 2012, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/income-segregation/atlanta/> (accessed March 19, 2014).

¹⁴ See Westminster Schools website, http://www.westminster.net/tuition_financial_aid (accessed May 15, 2014).

¹⁵ “Best Places for Business and Career,” August 2013, http://www.forbes.com/best-places-for-business/list/#page:1_sort:0_direction:asc_search:_filter:All%20states (accessed May 15, 2014).

suffer from the anxiety, depression and loneliness that “Generation Me” often encounters as their expectations for high salaries and instant success collide with reality.¹⁶

From the perspective of one who attends the church, the racial composition of the Peachtree appears to be largely white/Caucasian, with very few minorities in attendance. Peachtree’s Annual Statistical Report in 2013 reports the racial/ethnic make-up of the congregation as follows: white (96 percent), black/African American (1 percent), Hispanic (1 percent), Asian (1 percent) and other (1 percent). It is far more homogenous than the surrounding community, as the 2010 U.S Census reports the primary racial/ethnics groups in Atlanta to be as follows: white alone (38.4 percent), black or African American alone (54 percent), Latino (5.2 percent) and Asian (3.1 percent).¹⁷ The lack of diversity in the church’s worshipping community may reflect that the legacy of segregation is still prevalent in many Southern churches like Peachtree. Although the church’s leadership, and most who attend Peachtree, would state that philosophically and theologically they embrace the value of diversity, it is notable that the church is still not engaging the large African American population in our city within the worship community. The church has made a concerted effort to reach out to the local Hispanic population, forming a ministry to Latino children called *La Amistad*. *La Amistad*, which meets on Peachtree’s campus, is an afterschool tutoring program, providing services to students in several local elementary schools. However, greater efforts could be made to

¹⁶ Twenge, *Generation Me*, 129-134.

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, “State and County Quick Facts 2010: Atlanta, Georgia,” U.S. Census Bureau, February 5, 2015, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/1304000.html> (accessed February 20, 2015).

try to incorporate these families into the life of the church on Sunday mornings, and to become a more diverse worshipping community overall.

Research demonstrates that the Millennial generation in America is more ethnically diverse than any previous generation.¹⁸ Having been exposed to diversity in their schools, neighborhoods and perhaps their current workplace, Millennials tend to value racial diversity.¹⁹ As Peachtree seeks to reach and mentor the next generation, the lack of diversity in the congregation needs to be addressed. Especially in a city like Atlanta, where there is much racial diversity, the stark contrast between the homogeneity at Peachtree and the diversity in surrounding community may be something that deters young people from engaging with the church.

Values and Vision of Ministry

Peachtree Presbyterian Church has two styles of worship that might be said to have different “cultures.” While both services seek alignment with the overall mission of the church and share the same core values, their worship venues, practices and cultural differences vary greatly. On its website, Peachtree Presbyterian Church lists its vision: “To invite people to follow Jesus Christ as they: CULTIVATE relationships with God and others, GIVE generously of their resources, LIVE intentionally in ‘my95,’ PARTICIPATE in making Atlanta a better city and PARTNER with the Church around the world.”²⁰

¹⁸ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 4.

¹⁹ Alsop, *The Trophy Kids*, 15-16.

²⁰ See Peachtree Presbyterian Church’s website, <http://peachtreepres.org/whoweare/OurVision.aspx>. (accessed April 17, 2014).

The church's website describes the Sanctuary services as follows: "Our services in the Sanctuary are led by our Chancel Choir and pastors. Relevant sermons, hymns and anthems, and reflective times of prayer complete this engaging worship experience."²¹ In contrast, the description for the Summit says, "In the Lodge, you will experience modern worship, dynamic preaching that connects to everyday life, and compelling stories of mission, all in a more relaxed environment."²² These explanations primarily highlight the different styles of each service.

Like many churches with a traditional worship style, the Sanctuary services are guided by liturgy, hymns are accompanied by an organ, pastors wear robes and congregants are seated in pews in an ornate Sanctuary with high ceilings and balconies. The Sanctuary services are filmed and televised locally. These services also include traditional rituals of an elder placing the Bible at the beginning of the service, acolytes lighting candles and a weekly recitation of the Lord's Prayer. The pastors who participate in the service are seated up on the stage throughout, looking out at the audience during the service. A large stained glass window, with Jesus ascending to heaven is the focal point, behind the tall pulpit from which the pastor preaches. Congregants typically dress more formally, and most men wear suits and ties. Although these services appeal to people of all ages, the majority of Peachtree's "grand adults" over the age of fifty attend the Sanctuary services.

²¹ See Peachtree Presbyterian Church's website, <http://peachtreepres.org/sunday/> (accessed March 20, 2014).

²² See Peachtree Presbyterian Church's website, <http://peachtreepres.org/sunday/> (accessed March 20, 2014).

In contrast, the Summit services create a casual atmosphere, which compels people to “come as you are.” The Summit is located in the Lodge building, a modern brick building with a “coffee shop” feel, located on the opposite side of the street. The relaxed environment is evident to those who enter, coffee is served, and there is no expected attire. The pastor and those leading in worship also wear more casual clothing. The modern, up-beat worship is led by a team of musicians, playing guitar, bass, piano and drums, with male and female vocalists leading. The worship environment is modern and minimalist. Most people sit in neutral-colored, plastic chairs, and there is some “soft-seating,” with a handful of leather arm chairs towards the front of the stage. There is a small podium, from which the pastor preaches, and a small cross to the right of the stage. Two large screens contain worship lyrics, scripture passages, and visuals or videos that support the sermon topic being addressed. The majority of people who attend these services are under the age of forty, although the services include people of all ages.

There are several unstated, yet evident cultural differences between the two services. To members of the Sanctuary services, tradition is revered. The connection to the church’s denomination, Presbyterian Church (USA) is also valued by many members of the Sanctuary services. What has been done in the past is treasured and protected. Maintaining annual rituals such as “Kirkin’ of the Tartan,” in which members dress up in kilts and plaid to celebrate the Scottish heritage of the Presbyterian Church is one example of the celebration of tradition. Many of the grand adults who attend these services are long-standing members, who helped create the past traditions of the church.

While the church's Reformed theology is reflected in both worshipping communities, many young adults who attend the Summit services are either unaware of or not interested in the denominational issues of the church. For example, one young adult after attending the church for a year, asked this author if the Summit was a part of the Presbyterian Church. Many young adults are ignorant of larger conversations within the church leadership as to whether the church will stay within the Presbyterian Church (USA), nor do they feel loyalty to the denomination like the older generations who worship in the Sanctuary.

In the Summit services, innovation, creativity and the desire to create a service which appeals to the next generation are core values. While the message of the gospel is never subjected to innovation or change, the means and mechanisms by which this message is communicated is often discussed and re-invented. Church staff members meet weekly to discuss, "What can we learn from what happened last week?" and to brainstorm new ideas of how to engage the next generation in worship. Sometimes this means trying things that are experimental and participatory, such as a time of "community prayer" in which people may share a prayer request during the service. Another example of a participatory activity at the end of the service was an opportunity to plant seeds, so that people could take home a "sprout" to remind them that God's kingdom is like a seed that is always growing.

While both services make a concerted effort to welcome guests and to help them get connected into the life of the church, each service appeals to different types of visitors and guests. The Sanctuary services are often visited by people who have had a traditional

church background, from other mainline denominations, or churches with liturgical settings. They also appeal to many cultural Christians, who desire a more traditional and perhaps even sporadic connection to faith. Another large draw to the Sanctuary services is on Christmas and Easter where many visitors participate in the celebratory, traditional worship.

The Summit tends to attract people who desire a different experience of church. These services endeavor to reach the next generation and those who might be more skeptical to church and faith. The Summit seeks to reach people who are presently unchurched and who are more readily drawn into a casual, relaxed setting. The use of technology and the coffee house environment are attempts to use things that are a part of the present culture to make people feel more at ease. Similarly, the relaxed setting of the Summit appeals to people with young children, as the informal environment allows for a little bit more noise and wiggle room for children in the services.

While the majority of young adults attend the Summit services and the majority of grand adults attend the Sanctuary services, both styles of worship do have an intergenerational appeal. On a typical Sunday you will see many young people in the Sanctuary and many middle aged and senior adults in the Summit. The leadership of the church sees the importance of intergenerational worship and desires that both worship communities have members of all ages. The current leadership team in the Sanctuary is currently seeking to discover ways to draw in a younger crowd, who may also be drawn to a more traditional setting, and the Summit leadership team strives to incorporate older members of the congregation to mentor and lead the younger people in their midst.

As the church values reaching members of all generations, additional efforts should be made to find ways to build relationships between members of different generations in both worship venues. The uniqueness of a church like Peachtree, with its broad generational appeal, is that it provides a natural environment for mentoring possibilities. What has yet to be discovered is a strategic way to bridge the generational gap, which is what this paper proposes.

Young Adult Ministry at Peachtree

In addition to the over-arching vision for the church, the young adult ministry at Peachtree has its own vision: “Leading the next generation into a transformational relationship with God.” For the purposes of pastoral care, the church defines a “young adult” as a single or married person, without children, between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five. Those who have children, who may also fall into this age-range, are designated as members of the church’s family ministry as opposed to young adult ministry. The young adult ministry seeks to live out the church’s greater mission, while simultaneously focusing on the transformation of the younger generation.

The end result of this vision is that young adults would be led into a “transformational relationship with God.” Inherent in this vision is a desire for spiritual growth as people are continually being formed into the likeness of Christ. The vision helps people see that simply entering into a relationship with God is not the ultimate objective. The relationship with God is the beginning of a life-long process of transformation, in which one is continually being shaped and formed by and through this growing relationship.

The core value of a “transformational relationship with God” mirrors the church’s overall vision. The means by which transformation is encouraged is through constantly reinforcing the values of corporate worship, connecting in community, practicing private spiritual disciplines, and living out one’s faith through service to others. Three mechanisms are listed to clarify the church’s overall vision to “Cultivate relationships with God and others:” weekly corporate worship, participation in a life changing group, and personal spiritual disciplines. The objectives to “give,” “live,” “participate” and “partner,” are all outwardly focused actions, in which a person responds to her relationship with God and begins to live out her faith by joining in God’s mission in the world. Peachtree Presbyterian Church often uses the terms “mission” and “service” interchangeably.

The vision statement of the church encompasses a multifaceted plan for this “transformational relationship.” However, the two values that seem to resonate most with the young adult demographic at the church are “connecting in community” and “living out one’s faith through service to others.” Being highly relational, many young adults come to church seeking connections and friendships. The phenomenon of “belonging before believing” may occur as those who are longing for connection with others attend and join church groups, even before they are ready to “believe” or fully understand what is involved in a growing relationship with Christ. They are also drawn to service projects and living out their faith through mission and justice projects. The church is committed to forming local and global partnerships and encourages all of its members to be involved in service.

Recognizing that the young adult generation's openness to relationships, and simultaneously the church's desire that relationships serve as catalysts for life-change and transformation, the church values new ministries which encourage spiritual formation in the context of relationship. Presently, the young adult ministry at Peachtree offers a variety of opportunities to achieve these objectives: weekly small groups, a Sunday evening class, monthly events and an annual spiritual retreat. However, in all of these discipleship opportunities, young adults engage primarily with their peers, and rarely with those in a different life stage. In their book on cultivating spiritual formation during emerging adulthood, Setran and Kiesling propose that emerging adults need relational guides to serve as mentors in their life in this pivotal life stage.²³ Therefore, beginning a mentoring ministry for young adults at Peachtree seems well-suited both to the values and vision of the church as well as the needs and desires of the younger generation.

Need for Intergenerational Connections

Part of the present reality in America today that has had a great impact upon young adults in the church is a youth culture that celebrates young people and often keeps them separate from adults. Particularly in adolescence, with the proliferation of youth activities, teens begin to have less opportunities for meaningful interactions with their parents.²⁴ Busy schedules often hinder the potential for a regular family meal together, and the growing use of technology by teens and parents alike, also contributes to a loss of

²³ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation*, 231-232.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

connection between parents and children.²⁵ Studies show that even amongst families who are actively involved in the church, most parents rarely dialogue with their children about matters of faith in their adolescent years.²⁶ These studies of youth culture and their effects upon the Church are also relevant to the current cultural climate at Peachtree Presbyterian Church. Peachtree is trying to address the decreased interaction between parents and children by offering parenting seminars through the Children's and Student Ministries, encouraging parents to break this trend by reminding them of the importance of their role in the faith development of their children.

As a result of these conversations, one of the current emphases at Peachtree is worshipping together as a family. Kara Powell's research has indicated that one of the best ways to encourage a life-long faith is for students to participate in all-church worship.²⁷ This impetus to parents to engage in corporate worship with their children has led to a value of intergenerational worship amongst the church leadership. This value may have further implications for the promotion of mentoring relationships in the church as well, as people begin to see the value of not only bringing families together, but of older Christians engaging with younger Christians.

One of the unique benefits of a church with two unique worship styles and cultures is an appeal to all ages. Worship services are the primary gathering places where multiple generations come together at Peachtree. However, worship services offer little

²⁵ Ibid., 207-208

²⁶ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith*, 117-120.

²⁷ Kara Powell and Brad M. Griffin, "The Church Sticking Together: The Vital Role of Intergenerational Relationships in Fostering Sticky Faith," Fuller Youth Institute, October 17, 2011, <http://stickyfaith.org/articles/the-church-sticking-together> (accessed April 10, 2014).

time for people to engage in conversation. There is a brief moment for people to turn and greet someone around them, and then if they choose to do so, they may stay afterwards to visit with one another. In addition to a limited time to engage in conversation with others, another hindrance to intergenerational connections is that the natural tendency of individuals who come to a worship service is to sit together with others they know, and who are like them. This often means that following the services, younger people stay to talk with younger people, parents with other parents and seniors with other seniors. It is rare to see multiple generations staying after a worship service to visit with one another.

Furthermore, when people who are new to the church are offered opportunities to take a next step into community, they are funneled into a system which automatically connects them with others in a similar life stage. At Peachtree, nearly all of the environments for forming community, from Sunday school classes to small groups are segmented according to age and life stage. Therefore, a cycle is perpetuated where people grow more connected to others who are like them and they are not able to find natural opportunities to connect with others in a different life stage.

While young people may express a desire for intergenerational connections or a mentoring relationship, they are not always comfortable with initiating these connections on their own. There are several barriers to forming these connections: younger people are sometimes intimidated to reach out to people who are older than they are, they may fear encroaching upon someone else's busy schedule, or they simply may not know where to begin to find common ground to start up a conversation.²⁸ However, they are often open to someone else making an introduction to connect them with a mentor, or

²⁸ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation*, 210.

with an adult reaching out to them. With their familiarity with online dating and social media, the idea of a mediated way to form relationships is not foreign to young adults. In fact, in this author's conversations with young adults at Peachtree, most expressed a preference for someone else to help connect them to a mentor, rather than having to seek one out for themselves.

The challenge of intergenerational ministry is even greater in mega church environments.²⁹ While in churches of 200 or less, churches tend to operate more like families, in churches with 2000 or more members, they take on characteristics of corporations.³⁰ In larger church environments like Peachtree, with over 7,000 members, it can be difficult for people to form interpersonal relationships, even with people in their own stage of life, much less with those in different life stages. To encourage interpersonal interactions and connections, like many mega churches, Peachtree Presbyterian has formed communities for people in different life stages: children's ministry, student ministry, young adult ministry, adult ministry and grand adult ministry. Since it is so challenging to form organic, interpersonal relationships even within one's life stage, it is likely unrealistic to assume that intergenerational relationships will form without an intentional strategy to facilitate them, or a rally cry to encourage people to get involved in them.

The aim of this paper is therefore to create a mentoring program, which will offer an opportunity to connect older and younger Christians together, while also helping to break down some of the barriers that keep them apart. In order for this program to be

²⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Formation*, 259-261.

³⁰ Ibid.

effective, there are some larger issues within the life of the church that need to be addressed to help set the stage for the program to be received. First, the church needs to continue to address why this is important, conveying to its members the theological and practical imperative of an intergenerational spiritual formation model. Cultivating a new paradigm for the importance of intergenerational ministry will take some effort and require some vision-casting. The more mature members may need to be convinced of the importance of passing the baton of faith to the next generation. Younger church members may also need instruction on the importance of listening to the wisdom of Christians who are further along in their faith development. Furthermore, a spirit of mutuality and desire to learn from one another may be something that needs to be cultivated and communicated to the congregation, as the older generations may also have things to learn from those who are younger. The benefits of unity in the body of Christ, and different parts coming together, is a message that pastoral leadership and ministry leaders can emphasize through teaching and modeling.

In addition to helping the older generations capture the vision to pass the baton of faith to the next generation, there are other barriers that Peachtree will need to address to pave the way for intergenerational connections. The first potential barrier to forming mentoring relationships in the church is a lack of understanding about the differences between the generations. Boomers and even GenXers may find themselves frustrated by some of the different characteristics and values of Millennials. Millennials may navigate relationships in a very different manner than previous generations and may even hold a

different set of core values. They may also be perceived as entitled or self-centered.³¹ Frustrations about differences in work-styles abound in the marketplace. Due to their constant desire to remain connected, and their personal use of social media even in the workplace, they are often perceived as lazy and distracted.³² These negative interactions with young adults outside of the church certainly have the potential to affect their views of younger people in the church.

Potential mentors who desire to give back to the next generation may need some coaching and encouragement to recognize the potential that this generation brings to the church, despite what appears to be some of their glaring liabilities. One of the positive characteristics of Millennials is their passion for justice and being a part of a cause that is greater than themselves.³³ Because Millennials have both the energy and the desire to “save the world” they are often eager to serve in local service projects, mission trips, food and clothing drives, or fundraisers, and may even be inspired to start a charitable organization to help a worthy cause. They love being champions of causes and are eager to create momentum around movements in the church that give back and help stop injustices like poverty, sex trafficking, hunger and homelessness. One example of a way Peachtree has begun to highlight some of the positive characteristics of Millennials is through worship service interviews with some younger members who are volunteering and serving the church in a variety of ways.

³¹ Twenge, *Generation Me*, 216-217.

³² Alsop, *The Trophy Kids*, 135-146.

³³ Hannah Sachs, “Is Social Justice Sexy?” *Sojourners Magazine* 43:4 (April 2014): 26-29.

Recently, two young women from the congregation moved to India to work with International Justice Mission in India to help women who are being rescued from sex trafficking. Kimberlie uses her background as a therapist to counsel women and girls in an aftercare home. Sarah is using her legal training to help change laws that perpetuate injustice. Peachtree recently interviewed these women in a worship service and asked them to share about their experiences. Telling stories about young people like these may be one way to build a sense of unity in the church and appropriately call out the strengths of the younger generation. Portraying the next generation in a positive light is something that might help older generations counteract some of the negative characteristics they experience when interacting with younger people.

Similarly, younger generations may also need some coaching about how to honor and learn from older members of the church. In a recent conversation with a young adult member of this author's small group, she mentioned that she did not see the need to consult an older person when dealing with a problem, adding that she felt more comfortable going to a peer, as she felt that a peer's advice would be as beneficial as a mentor's. She balked at the idea that wisdom could be acquired through life experience, and was convinced that younger people possessed as much wisdom as their elders. Perhaps hearing more biblical messages about wisdom, the value of learning from mentors in the faith, and helping young people to recognize some of the liabilities of their own generation could open their eyes to see the need to learn from those who have gone before them. The church may also need to find ways to lift up the wisdom and seasoned

faith of elders in the church, through allowing them to share their own stories of the ways that God has been at work in their lives.

Setran and Kiesling confirm that mentoring relationships in the church can be inhibited by emerging adult opinions of older adults.³⁴ Emerging adults may perceive adults to be “out of touch” when it comes to social issues, cultural trends, and technology use.³⁵ In some of these areas, they may even feel that their views or skills are superior to the generations that precede them. Particularly in the areas of technology and social media use, the younger generations are often more adept than their elders. Citing Margaret Mead’s anthropological studies on “prefigurative societies,” Setran and Kiesling argue that the current Millennial generation may indeed exhibit the attitudes of those living in a prefigurative society.³⁶ In contrast to a “postfigurative society,” where children learn from their elders, in a prefigurative society, the children are seen as those who instruct the adults.³⁷ Millennials, who believe they have significant knowledge or expertise in areas where their elders lack, may therefore see themselves as having something to teach adults, as opposed to having things to learn from them.

Setran and Kiesling argue that this arrogant perspective may have a detrimental effect upon this generation’s faith development, leaving them to navigate the transition to adulthood without the guidance of elders.³⁸ As they turn to peers to help them make

³⁴ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation*, 210.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 210-11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

decisions and define their worldviews, they miss out on the wisdom, experience and influence of role models who may offer a different perspective. The lack of adult mentors during the emerging adult years can even lead to a sense of cynicism, without people to inspire them with greater ideals or values than their peers, or the younger celebrity heroes that they admire.³⁹

In contrast to the research that indicates this generational divide, there are others who suggest that Millennials hold their parents and older adults in higher regard than previous generations.⁴⁰ This paradox may demonstrate a more hopeful possibility of adult mentors being received by Millennials. It may also spark a need for a greater sense of mutuality in relationships, where the mentor is intentional to allow the younger person to also contribute to the relationship, coming to the relationship with a spirit to receive as well as to give.

This paper suggests that what the church needs to start the process of bridging the generational divide at Peachtree Presbyterian Church is a ministry strategy which pairs older and younger generations together, and then supports these “pairs” in the process of mutual self-discovery and faith development. However, the effectiveness of the mentoring program will ultimately depend upon both parties coming to the relationship with a spirit of openness, and a willingness to grow and change to meet each other’s needs and learn from one another. Mentors may need to approach the relationship as more of a friendship, where both parties contribute to the relationship. Mentees may need to come to the relationship with a greater spirit of humility, with a willingness to ask

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Howe and Strauss, *Millennials Rising*, 8.

questions, glean advice and learn from the wisdom and life experience of their mentors.

Chapter 3 will examine the theological and biblical imperative for intergenerational faith formation, demonstrating that the imitative nature of the Christian faith is very model that Jesus left for all future disciples.

PART TWO
FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MENTORING

The term “mentor” has its origin in Greek mythology. Mentor was the alter-ego of the goddess Athena when she disguised herself in order to guide and counsel Odysseus and his son Telemachus on their journey.¹ Although, the term “mentor” is not used in scripture, the concept of a master who disciplines his protégé is the very image that Jesus modeled in his own ministry. Jesus’ disciples learned from him by traveling with him, watching his life and learning from his example. In the first century, the Greek word for disciple, *mathetes*, had the connotation of “student,” “adherent” or “follower.”² In the Greek world it was often used in reference to an apprentice, who was under the instruction of one who was superior in knowledge.³ Discipleship was a concept known in philosophical, religious and even political circles. While the term “discipleship” today is

¹ Sondra Higgins Matthaehi, *Faith Matters: Faith-Mentoring in the Faith Community* (Valley Forge, PN: Trinity Press International, 1996), 12.

² M.J. Wilkins, “Disciples and Discipleship,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2d edition, eds. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 202.

³ K.H. Rengstorf, “*Mathetes*” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1967), 416.

commonly used to convey instruction in the Christian faith, or the promotion of spiritual growth, the most literal definition of discipleship is the process by which one learns from a “master.”

The theological basis for the importance of mentoring relationships in the life of faith is grounded in Jesus’ call to discipleship. He called people to be his disciples and then left them with the task of making new disciples (Mt 28:19-20). Following the pattern set by Jesus himself, Christians throughout the ages have embraced the principle that those who are more spiritually mature in the faith should help nurture and guide the lives of newer disciples, who desire to learn. As one seeks to understand Jesus’ pattern of discipleship, this must include not only the content of his teaching, but also the methodology he used to teach others.⁴ Spiritual mentoring is grounded in the relational methodology Jesus used in the discipleship process.

This chapter will also address the biblical foundations for spiritual mentoring. Mentoring relationships find their support in the imitative nature of the life of faith. Beginning in the Old Testament, as parents are instructed to pass on their faith to the next generation, the life of faith has been seen as something to be replicated and imitated. Paul’s letters to the churches further demonstrate the biblical foundation for faith formation coming through both words of instruction, but also through modeling a way of life to others.

Finally, this chapter will discuss the importance of viewing the spiritual life as a journey in which one is continually making progress, in order to establish the importance

⁴ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 38.

of spiritual guidance. In this section, various conceptions of salvation will be addressed to come to a better understanding of how one's conception of salvation supports or negates the need for growth in the life of faith. A theological understanding of salvation that leads to on-going spiritual growth is necessary in order to support one's need for a mentor.

Jesus' Ministry of Discipleship

In Greek vocabulary, the *mathetes* or disciple, was seen as a complementary term to the *didaskalos* or teacher.⁵ In the Hellenistic use of the term *mathetes*, a disciple was a learner who received instruction from a teacher. However, Jesus' ministry of discipleship uniquely emphasized a personal aspect of discipleship that was not always present in the philosophical or academic circles of Hellenism. For example, instead of teaching them methods of interpretation, Jesus communicated to them directly about the will of God. Jesus established personal relationships with his disciples, in which he shared his life and ministry with them. His instruction was both modeled and taught. Although he certainly taught his disciples content that needed to be learned, the purpose of their learning was not simply so they could master the subject, but rather so that they would live out his teaching. Through Jesus' relational ministry he both modeled and taught his disciples a new way of life.

⁵ The substance of this paragraph is based on Robert Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve: Discipleship and Revelation in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1968), 93-97.

This new and more personal form of discipleship, to which Jesus called his disciples, stands in contrast with the Rabbinic and Hellenistic traditions.⁶ In the Rabbinic tradition, allegiance to the master was grounded in his ability to teach the Torah. In the Greek tradition, it was based in the ideas that the master represented. In contrast to both of these, Jesus called his disciples to allegiance with himself over any specific cause. It is allegiance to Jesus himself, rather than simply his teaching or ideas, to which all future disciples are called.

Jesus' call for his first disciples to "follow me," exemplifies the imitative nature of the call to discipleship (Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17; Mk 2:14; Lk 5:27). This imitative nature of discipleship was not entirely unique to Jesus, as Jewish disciples often imitated their masters as well.⁷ The Gospel narratives illustrate that the disciples literally followed in Jesus' footsteps, to observe his interactions with people, to listen to his words of instruction, to engage with the crowds, and to follow him up a mountainside for time away in prayer. In the gospel of Mark, the primary characterization of discipleship is that of "being with Jesus."⁸ As the disciples followed Jesus and spent time with him, they were exposed to his teaching, given the opportunity to witness his interactions with people and ultimately learned how to emulate his ministry. Robert Meyer states, "It is natural to suppose that such following and presence with Jesus is understood as bringing

⁶ Rengstorf, "Mathetes," 447.

⁷ Wilkins "Disciples and Discipleship," 206.

⁸ Meyer, *Jesus and the Twelve*, 103.

the disciples into further conformity with the ‘way’ and ‘mind’ of Jesus. The portrait of Jesus is in a real sense a prototype of the way of the disciple.”⁹

Meye continues to illuminate that two pictures emerge about the way of Jesus in the gospel of Mark. The first was his emphasis on the way of the cross and the second was his “positive concern for men.”¹⁰ Jesus’ disciples watched him model a sacrificial way of serving others which culminated in his death on the cross. He also demonstrated a caring ministry for those who were hurting or on the margins, healing the sick, blessing children, casting out demons, feeding the hungry and engaging with people deemed “outcasts” or “sinners” by society.¹¹ Jesus’ disciples learned, from watching him minister to others in need, how they too would care for others. This is another example of how both the content of Jesus’ message and the model of his personal ministry set a pattern for Christian discipleship.

Meye addresses how Jesus’ call to “follow me” is followed by the commission to become “fishers of men.” While there has been much discussion upon the meaning of this phrase, Meye ultimately concludes that Jesus is calling his disciples to pattern their future ministry after his.¹² The way that Jesus cared for and ministered to others, is the same way in which the disciples are to “fish for men.”

Jesus leaves his disciples with a clear mandate of how they are to continue in the path of discipleship---which includes following Jesus, the master, and “fishing for

⁹ Ibid., 103-104.

¹⁰ Ibid., 103.

¹¹ Ibid., 103-104

¹² Ibid., 113.

people,” making new disciples. Jesus commissioned his followers to continue the process of disciple making themselves saying, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,” (Mt. 28:19), thereby initiating on-going discipleship into the mission of the Christian life. Jesus called his original disciples, whom he equipped and trained, to help initiate others into the life of discipleship that he has modeled for them. They are the paradigm for what new disciples are to become.¹³ The Great Commission set the pattern for relational disciple-making to continue throughout the ages.

While the Gospel writers use the term *mathetes* to refer to the personal disciples of Jesus, who physically followed him during his earthly ministry, the book of Acts broadens the use to refer to all Christians.¹⁴ Disciples came to be known as not only those who physically followed Jesus during his earthly ministry, but all throughout the ages who by faith receive him and commit their lives to following him. Dallas Willard illuminates the simplicity of discipleship when Jesus walked the earth, as Jesus called people to follow him in “an attitude of study, obedience and imitation.”¹⁵ Following a person whom they could emulate by watching his interactions with people, and listening to his teachings gave people a clear, straightforward path to discipleship. For followers of Christ who live after his ascension, the idea of “being with Jesus” cannot happen in the same manner that it could for the original disciples. However, the patterning of one’s heart and inner attitudes remains the same, as disciples of every era seek to be like

¹³ E.J. Schnable, “Mission” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2d edition, eds. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 608.

¹⁴ Rengstorf, “*Mathetes*,” 443.

¹⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 260.

Jesus.¹⁶ Jesus's own words declared the truth of the principle, "everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher" (Lk. 6:40).

Imitating the life of Christ involves more than simply applying the principle of "What would Jesus do?" to specific choices. Rather, true discipleship involves learning how to pattern one's entire life after Christ, learning "how to invest all our time and our energies of mind and body as he did."¹⁷ This patterning of life after Christ is something which needs to be learned, often through the modeling of other Christ-followers, for it is an on-going, life-long journey of transformation.

Imitative Nature of the Christian Faith

A second foundation for establishing the need for mentoring relationships is to demonstrate the biblical support for the imitative nature of the life of faith. The biblical record demonstrates the imitative nature of the Christian faith beginning in the Old Testament, as faith is seen as something that is to be passed on throughout the generations. Older generations are instructed to remember what God has done and to transmit the message of his faithfulness to the next generation (Ps 145:4). Exodus 12:26-27 demonstrates that older generations were expected to make themselves available to the younger generations, who might have questions or need explanations about faith.¹⁸ The intergenerational nature of faith is seen as parents are instructed to teach their children the commandments (Dt 6:6-7; 11:19), and to continue the covenant relationship with God

¹⁶ Ibid., 261.

¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 80.

through the generations (Gn 17:9-10). God often refers to himself as the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” reinforcing the idea of God’s continuing faithfulness through the generations.

The importance of intergenerational faith formation is also seen outside of the structures of the family. The Old Testament gives examples of several cross-generational mentoring relationships between people who were not members of the same family: Samuel and Eli (1 Sm 2-3), Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19-21; 2 Kgs 2:1-18), Saul and David (1 Sm 18:18-27) and Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1-4).¹⁹ In the case of Samuel and Eli and Saul and David, the spiritual leadership of the mentor was short-lived; however, the faith of the mentee continued on despite the moral failure of the elder.

Old Testament wisdom literature touches on another theme that is vital to mentoring relationships, namely learning from the wise by seeking their counsel in decision making (Prv 10:20; 15:2, 22; 24:5). The wise men of Israel, known as *hakhamim*, were one of three types of religious leaders, who “counseled their fellows on all ranks and callings on the principles of the good life and details of personal conduct.”²⁰ Much like spiritual mentors, these wise men, also gave guidance primarily to individuals. Spiritual counsel continues to be an important aspect of mentoring relationships today as young people need examples of faith to instruct them and give them advice as they make important choices.

¹⁹ Biblical examples and references cited in Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 81.

²⁰ John T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 2. McNeil identifies the three classes of religious experts as the priests, prophets and the wise men.

Imitating the Example of Others

In the New Testament, mentors not only encourage faith formation through their instruction and words of spiritual counsel, but also by living out their faith through example. The New Testament gives not only the mandate to follow Christ, but also gives instruction to follow the example of godly people. The ministry of the Apostle Paul is the most notable example of a spiritual mentor who encourages people to imitate his life. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). To the Philippians he says, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put into practice” (Phil 4:9). Paul offers himself as a model of the Christian faith, urging others to imitate his own life. These instructions reveal much about the nature of Paul’s ministry to the Philippians: he took time to interact with the people of Philippi, through teaching and words of instruction, yet also lived among them so they could observe his life of faith. In Paul’s ministry to churches, he also had a ministry to individuals, which is evident in the incidental references he makes in his letters.²¹ He greets individuals by name and offers them words of encouragement or advice.

Even though Paul’s missionary lifestyle did not allow him to remain in one locale, he was intentional about continuing the relationships he had begun, and his ministry of letter writing served as a form of spiritual mentoring when he could not be there in person. In his absence, Paul advises the Philippians to look to others as models of the faith: “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you” (Phil 3:17). This continuing pattern is seen in

²¹ Ibid., 83.

Paul's ministry to the Corinthians, as he explains that he has been like a father to them and urges them to imitate his life (1 Cor 4:16). He later sends Timothy to further instruct them, saying that he will "remind you of my way of life" (1 Cor 4:17). Pauline literature clearly illustrates the imitative nature of discipleship; however, the encouragement to emulate the lives of godly people is coupled with a responsibility to pass on what one has learned to others.

The New Testament continues this theme of mentoring and passing down the faith. In the formation of the church, Paul gives instructions to Timothy to mentor people who are capable of teaching others. Second Timothy 2:2 says, "And what you have heard from me through many reliable witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others well." The book of Titus also expresses the idea that older people should be trained so that they can mentor the younger (Titus 2).

The Christian Life as a Transformational Journey

The theological basis for spiritual mentoring is grounded in the biblical call to discipleship, coupled with the imitative nature of the Christian faith. Another theological principle that must be established to demonstrate the need for mentoring relationships is the importance of viewing the Christian life as a transformational journey. This paper seeks to establish that a correct theological understanding of salvation leads to a transformational journey, and supports the need for spiritual guidance along the way. While the early and medieval church emphasized the importance of progress in the spiritual life, some Protestants have shied away from the journey motif for fear that it conflicts with the understanding that salvation is by faith alone. The Reformed emphasis

on the role of faith in salvation, has at times inadvertently contributed to the view that to suggest the importance of progress in the spiritual life is to promote salvation by works.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions have traditionally embraced the journey motif more readily as they find support for it in the Pseudo-Dionysian three-fold way of purgation, illumination, and union.²² The three-fold way demonstrates the need to progress in the life of faith, acknowledging that there are always further depths to plunge as one moves toward union with Christ. Gary Moon observes, “It is possible that some Protestants have become fascinated with spiritual direction because the richness and texture of viewing Christian transformation as a journey have been diminished in their traditions.”²³ This chapter will therefore explore how the motif of a transformational journey finds theological support in the three-fold way, as well as the Reformed order of salvation. It will then suggest the importance of spiritual guidance for the journey of transformation.

Teresa of Avila: The Journey of the Three-Fold Way

Teresa of Avila’s writings have been influential in supporting the idea that the spiritual life is a transformational journey. In her book the *Interior Castle*, Teresa follows the threefold order of Dionysius, using the metaphor of a castle that one’s soul journeys through as it moves toward union with God.²⁴ Teresa’s guidebook has often been used by those who desire greater depths in the disciplines of prayer and

²² Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, eds., *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 19.

²³ Ibid., 18.

²⁴ As cited in Richard J. Foster and Gayle D. Beebe, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 262.

contemplation. She uses the image of a castle with many rooms to show how the soul makes progress through prayer by moving through these different rooms, each representing a different level or stage of the spiritual life. In the first three dwelling places, the goal of progress in the spiritual life is achieved by “human efforts and the ordinary help of grace.”²⁵ However, in the remaining four dwelling places, the forward movement is attributed to the “passive or mystical elements of the spiritual life.”²⁶ In Teresa’s vision, God’s presence dwells in the seventh room, in the center of the castle. All forward movement in the spiritual life is a journey towards the presence of God, the “King of Glory.”

While set in a vastly different time and place, Teresa’s writings are instructive for those today who desire to make progress in the spiritual life. She highlights two important themes that are pertinent to a discussion on the theological importance of spiritual mentoring. The first is the role of self-knowledge in spiritual growth, and the second is the importance of spiritual guidance for the journey of faith.

Teresa’s begins her discussion on the first dwelling places by focusing on the beauty of the soul saying “There is nothing comparable to the magnificent beauty of a soul and its marvelous capacity.”²⁷ She makes a connection between a lack of soul-care and the deficit of self-knowledge: “It is a shame and unfortunate that through our own

²⁵ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), 19.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 35.

fault we don't understand ourselves or know who we are."²⁸ For Teresa, this lack of self-knowledge comes from neglecting the soul. She argues that people focus too much on their bodies at the expense of the soul. Her analysis on the human tendency to focus on the body at the expense of one's interior life, seems as true today as it was almost five-hundred years ago.

In Teresa's thought, self-knowledge is akin to humility and therefore proper attention to one's soul will lead to a greater sense of humility that is necessary for spiritual growth. She sees nothing as important as humility and therefore encourages one to first begin in the room where self-knowledge is addressed instead of trying to progress further into other rooms.²⁹ She highlights how self-knowledge and knowledge of God, work together: "Rather let's strive to make more progress in self-knowledge, for in my opinion we shall never completely know ourselves if we don't strive to know God. By gazing at His grandeur, we get in touch with our own lowliness; by looking at His purity, we shall see our own filth; by pondering His humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble."³⁰

She argues that this balanced approach of pondering both the grandeur of God, as well as one's own condition, will lead to a practice of better virtue.³¹ She discourages too much wallowing in one's own misery, stating that reflecting upon God will make our

²⁸ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

intellects and wills “become nobler and better prepared for every good work.”³² She explains the dangers of “distorted self-knowledge,” in which one mistakes her fears for humility, which may actually keep her from virtue. Instead, she admonishes her fellow Carmelite nuns: “we should set our eyes on Christ, our Good, and on His saints. There we shall learn true humility, the intellect will be enhanced, as I have said, and self-knowledge will not make one base and cowardly.”³³

For Teresa, one needs to consult a guide so that she can continue to grow and make progress in humility. She points out the importance for even those who live outside of a religious order to choose a spiritual guide to consult so that they “will not do their own will in anything.”³⁴ Her words about the role of the guide seem applicable to the role of a mentor in the spiritual life today. Guides provide encouragement through their example and also a model to imitate:

For in order to know ourselves, it helps a great deal to speak with someone who already knows the world for what it is. And it helps also because when we see some things done by others that seem so impossible for us and the ease with which they do them, it is very encouraging and seems that through their flight we also will make bold to fly, as do the bird’s fledglings when they are taught; for even though they do not begin to soar immediately, little by little they imitate the parent.³⁵

Throughout her work, she refers to the role of the confessor in the religious order, who also provides words of correction and spiritual counsel, which enables one to make

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 44.

³⁴ Ibid., 65.

³⁵ Ibid.

progress in the spiritual life. However, Teresa's references to the confessors are not all positive, as she mentions some who are not spiritual, and those who challenge the idea that one could receive a vision from God. Yet, despite these challenges, she adheres to the benefits of having a spiritual guide, and even equates the voice of the confessor with that of Christ. Particularly in important matters, such as validating a locution that one believes is from God, Teresa advises her sisters to consult a confessor to confirm the message one has heard before acting upon it.³⁶ She strongly warns against acting in disobedience to the voice of the confessor.

While Teresa's situation is contextualized to the religious order, the principle of having spiritual guides who can help counsel, instruct, or help people discern the voice of God is one that the church is in need of today. Particularly, for younger people who are making important decisions, they need mentors to consult in such matters. The role of a spiritual mentor, who will come alongside a young adult to encourage them, provide an example of how to live, and who will be available for them to consult in matters of importance is critical for young people who desire to progress in the life of faith today. Teresa sees progress, not as optional, but as an essential component of the Christian life as one moves towards a greater sense of union with God.

The Journey in the Reformed Tradition

While the Reformed understanding of the Christian life has emphasized the role of salvation by grace through faith, it has by no means subordinated the importance of progress in the life of faith. Reformed theology highlights the order of salvation as

³⁶ Ibid., 123.

regeneration, sometimes referred to as conversion, sanctification and glorification. The first two stages are most pertinent to a discussion on progress in the Christian life, because the final stage of glorification is achieved only in the heavenly realm. John Calvin writes about the distinct, yet inseparable nature of justification and sanctification.³⁷ Although theological text books separate and explain the distinctions between these stages, the Reformed understanding of salvation sees these two as working together. Justification, if it is genuine, should lead to sanctification, which is growth in holiness, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Although Calvin insists that righteousness is conferred by grace alone, he also argues that justification and sanctification are inseparably linked together.³⁸ Calvin's emphasis on grace as the vehicle which imparts righteousness in no way diminishes his emphasis on the necessity of good works in the life of the Christian. His argument relies on the principle that although good works are required for righteousness, they have no power to confer righteousness.

The foundation of Calvin's theology lies in his Christology, his belief that Christ is the basis for both the righteousness that justifies, so that one has confidence on the day of judgment, and growth in grace throughout one's life.³⁹ For Calvin, when a person lays hold of Christ's righteousness through justification, he also grasps sanctification through

³⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.11.6.

³⁸ The substance of this paragraph is based on James Bradley, "Calvin and the Means of Grace: Word, Sacrament and Union with Christ," (class lectures presented in the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller Theological Seminary, 2005-2007), 1.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

Christ. Therefore, “Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify.”⁴⁰ Since Christ contains both justification and sanctification “inseparably in himself,” and Christ cannot be divided, it follows that anyone who possesses Christ must also be made “partaker in his sanctification.”⁴¹ However, while justification is complete, thereby granting the Christian confidence before God, the process of sanctification is never complete in this life.

Stanley Grenz makes the distinction between positional and conditional sanctification. Positional sanctification is a righteous standing that one receives by God’s grace through faith.⁴² Conditional sanctification is the transformation of lifestyle or morality that flows out of this new position or righteous standing.⁴³ Positional sanctification is the imparted righteousness of Christ that allows one to move forward in conditional sanctification. However, in order for the transformation of lifestyle to occur, there must be cooperation on the part of the person who is growing in sanctification. Therefore, this is a process that varies from individual to individual. Those who allow the Holy Spirit to work within their lives will grow in sanctification. The writer of the Hebrews points out the effort that sanctification requires as well as its centrality to salvation saying, “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.16.1.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans, 1994), 443.

⁴³ Ibid.

A discussion of the Reformed theological understanding of salvation is important to grasp the mechanism by which progress occurs in the Christian life. Justification and sanctification must be seen as working together, and both must be understood as a means of grace. Martin Luther describes the way that grace works: “it is true to say concerning ourselves that, inasmuch as God works in us, we work—though ‘work’ here means actually that the one doing the acting is himself acted upon, moved and led.”⁴⁴ Therefore, human effort and progress in the transformational journey should not be understood apart from grace. A Reformed understanding of salvation supports the need for progress in the life of faith as one grows in sanctification, as this too is a gift of grace.

This author agrees with Simon Chan’s analysis of how Reformed theology has at times overemphasized grace as divine favor at the expense of the doctrine of grace as “endowment, an enabling gift.”⁴⁵ Chan offers an alternative perspective that demonstrates how the two work together: “But surely grace can be seen as both a favor and an infused quality in the soul. Relationships, after all, produce character, and character in turn is needed to sustain and enhance relationship. The two aspects of grace must be kept together, as indeed they are in Scripture.”⁴⁶ Chan argues that in order to establish a spiritual theology that is sustainable, these two aspects of grace need to be seen as working together, for without grace as unmerited favor, the cultivation of virtues

⁴⁴ As cited in Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 81.

⁴⁵ Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 83.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

will be relegated to moralism, and without grace as an empowering gift there will be no “meaningful human response.”⁴⁷

While the Protestant emphases on salvation by grace through faith and the distinction between justification and sanctification have led to a greater sense of assurance of salvation for many, practically speaking, these ideas have sometimes inadvertently promoted the idea that salvation is an instantaneous event, equivalent only to justification, and sanctification or spiritual growth is a beneficial, yet non-essential, component of the Christian life. In this view of salvation, the journey is completed before it has even begun, and one may not see the need for any further progress. While, this is an over-simplification of a complex theological issue, and certainly there are branches of Protestantism that have put great emphasis on spiritual growth, such as the holiness movements in their pursuit of Christian perfection, the journey motif is one that has been slower to catch on in many Reformed circles. Spiritual progress in the Reformed tradition has been seen more as overcoming the doubt of assurance than movement towards Christian perfection.⁴⁸ However, to embrace the idea that the Christian life is a journey, one need not embrace all that the doctrine of Christian perfection puts forth--that it is possible to achieve a state in which one will not intentionally sin in the present life--but rather to see the goal of the Christian life as being formed into the image and likeness of Christ⁴⁹ (Gal 4:19; Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Alister McGrath, *Spirituality in an Age of Change: Rediscovering the Spirit of the Reformers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 106-112.

⁴⁹ See John Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* for a fuller explanation of the doctrine of perfection.

In order to demonstrate the need for mentoring relationships, spiritual growth must not be seen as an optional addition, but rather an essential movement of the Christian life. One's theological conception of salvation is pertinent to this discussion. In the American evangelical church, one more recent conception of salvation that minimizes the importance of progress in the life of faith is that salvation is found solely in the forgiveness of sins.⁵⁰ In this conception of salvation, salvation is complete when one recognizes his need for forgiveness through Christ's death upon the cross. Dallas Willard acknowledges that while forgiveness of sins is certainly an essential aspect of salvation, this knowledge of forgiveness must also lead to a focus on the new life that comes through a relationship with Christ.⁵¹ Paul puts emphasis on the life of Christ in 2 Corinthians 4:10: "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." Furthermore, he states that salvation comes not only through the death of Jesus, but also through his life (Rom 5:10). Dallas Willard illuminates how the more narrow focus of salvation as solely the cross act, which brought about forgiveness of sins, can lead to the neglect of the importance of the life and teachings of Jesus.⁵² A more complete understanding of salvation is that people are saved from sin so that they can live for Christ.

This complete understanding of salvation, focuses not only on the death, but also on the resurrected life of Christ. Salvation includes not only forgiveness of sins, but

⁵⁰ Willard, *Spirit of Disciplines*, 33.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36

impartation of life.⁵³ Willard notes that the life of Christ which resides within the believer will lead to the same quality of life that Christ lived.⁵⁴ Romans 8:11 further illuminates that if the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in a person, “he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.” Romans 8 explains how the Spirit enables people to no longer live according to the “flesh.” New life in Christ should lead to transformation in a person’s life, enabling him to conquer patterns of sin, and to live according to the “Spirit” rather than the “flesh.”

The metaphor of a transformational journey, finds continued support in the biblical theme of spiritual growth that leads to maturity, which permeates scripture. For example, 1 Peter 2:2 states, “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.” 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 4:13 demonstrates that Christian maturity leads to “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” The writer of Hebrews, however, links Christian maturity with the ability to teach others about righteousness (Heb 5:12-14). The writer of Hebrews rebukes those who have not grown up into Christian maturity, stating that they should be able to teach others by now, but instead they still need to be taught “elementary truths.” This passage of scripture links the goal of Christian maturity with helping others mature in the faith. This is yet another example of how spiritual growth and the necessity of passing on the faith to others is woven into the biblical narrative.

⁵³ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Guidance for the Journey

Viewing the Christian life as a transformational journey reveals the importance of having a guide for the journey. If the life of faith is a movement towards being conformed to the image of Christ, this will be a process in which support is needed. Thomas Merton expresses the benefit of spiritual guidance saying, “But in all contemplative traditions, it has been found necessary that those who have attained to some depth of religious insight should to some extent guide others who seek to attain the same experience of truth in their own lives.”⁵⁵ It is important to remember that the mentor does not need to create the movement, as spiritual growth is a means of grace, brought about by the Holy Spirit. The mentor simply walks alongside to assist, support, and help the young adult discern how the Holy Spirit is leading.

In sum, the theological basis for spiritual mentoring touches on several important themes: the call to discipleship, the imitative nature of the Christian faith, and the life of faith as a transformational journey. Seen together, these themes make a case for the benefit of providing spiritual guidance to people who desire to make progress in the Christian life. In a season of life where young adults are in need of spiritual guidance, spiritual mentoring offers a way to intentionally link them with more spiritually mature adults who are committed to offering them practical and spiritual guidance.

⁵⁵ Kevin G. Culligan, *Spiritual Direction: Contemporary Readings* (Locust Valley, NY: Living Flame Press, 1983), 217.

Barna studies are showing that many “twentysomethings” are “putting Christianity of the shelf”⁵⁶ or “struggling to find their place in the church”⁵⁷ after their teen years, and the church needs to be intentional in finding new avenues to meet the needs of this generation. Offering a mentoring program for young adults is one way to show them that their needs are recognized and that people in the church care for them as individuals. It could also provide a safe place for them to process some of the issues pertaining to the church with which they struggle, to ask questions and to receive guidance. Furthermore, spiritual mentoring relationships, which draw from a large history of methods of soul care, offer both friendship and the opportunity for support as one seeks spiritual growth. The next chapter will explore how mentoring relationships can draw from various traditions of spiritual guidance in the Church.

⁵⁶ Barna Group, “Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years,” Barna Group, September 11, 2006, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/147-most-twentysomethings-put-christianity-on-the-shelf-following-spiritually-active-teen-years#.VLPXTCvF9S0> (accessed January 12, 2015).

⁵⁷ Barna Group, “Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches,” Barna Group, September 24, 2003 <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/127-twentysomethings-struggle-to-find-their-place-in-christian-churches#.VLPXrSvF9S0> (accessed January 12, 2015).

CHAPTER 4

TRADITIONS OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

The Church has given spiritual counsel in a variety of forms throughout the centuries. Historically, the “cure of souls,” though largely a task of the clergy, was also practiced in monastic and lay communities. One such method of soul care is spiritual direction, which refers to the practice in which an individual spiritual master, often a priest or monk, meets with an attentive disciple for the purpose of pursuing discernment in one’s spiritual life. Although to some people today the term “spiritual direction” has archaic and even hierarchical connotations, much can be gleaned from its practice through the centuries as one seeks to create a model for spiritual mentoring in the church today.¹

Spiritual Direction

Anderson and Reese make a distinction between historic spiritual direction and contemporary models of spiritual guidance by contrasting them in five different categories. Their research suggests that historic spiritual direction traditionally is

¹ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), 9.

classified as formal, hierarchical or one-directional, authoritarian or directive, official or clerical and individualistic or private.² In contrast, they suggest that more contemporary models of spiritual guidance tend towards the following characteristics: informal, mutual, suggestive and evocative, unofficial with lay mentors and either group-oriented or individualistic. This chapter will examine both historic and contemporary models of spiritual direction in order to draw from the strengths of these established traditions and to suggest a contextualized model of spiritual mentoring for young adults in the church today.

The tradition of spiritual direction likely began in the fourth and fifth centuries, as people journeyed to the desert to seek advice from the desert fathers and mothers who led solitary, religious lives that people desired to emulate.³ George E. Demacopoulos makes the distinction between clerical and monastic spiritual direction in the life of the early Church. He identifies the monastic approach, where a spiritual father was more intimately connected with his disciple, as the more personal of the two.⁴ The monastic model de-emphasized the necessity of ordination to qualify one to give direction, but instead stressed that the qualities necessary for leadership resided in one's personal character and whether he was a person worthy of respect. Ammonas, a fourth century monastic and disciple of Antony the Great, believed the two qualities most essential for

² The content of this paragraph is based on Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 35-36.

³ Matthaei, *Faith Matters*, 75.

⁴ George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 3.

spiritual leadership were obedience and devotion in one's prayer life.⁵ Private ascetic practice also qualified a director to lead others, for he believed God's power is revealed in the quiet.⁶

Spiritual direction continued to flourish in monastic orders throughout the Middle Ages, and spiritual directors also served as confessors. Today, the practice of spiritual direction is beginning to grow in Protestant circles, although in the centuries following the Reformation, spiritual direction was largely confined to Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and some Anglican circles. The Reformation movement away from this largely "Roman" practice was due, in part, to seeing the role of the spiritual director as that of the confessor, one to whom a penitent came for confession and prescribed penance.⁷ As Reformed theology eradicated the sacrament of reconciliation from Protestant practice, the impulse for people to see a confessor began to wane. Furthermore, prior to the Reformation, much of spiritual direction took place within monasteries, and due to the Reformers' abandonment of monastic movements, the custom went with it.⁸ However, the Reformers did not out-right condemn the practice of spiritual direction, and several of them—Bucer, Zwingli, Calvin and Luther—engaged in it or advocated for it in its various forms.⁹ Nevertheless, in Protestant churches, the

⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷ Patricia Ranft, *A Woman's Way: The Forgotten History of Women Spiritual Directors* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 157.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 157-159. For more specific examples please see the chapter entitled "Spiritual Direction among the Protestants" in Ranft, 157-172.

classical practice was greatly diminished for centuries. However, amongst Catholics in the sixteenth century, spiritual direction received an impetus from Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Though he never used the term "director" or "directee," his work is considered the "foundation for development of a whole school of spiritual direction,"¹⁰ and today is used by many as a manual for spiritual direction.

Spiritual Direction as a Model for Spiritual Mentoring

Kenneth Leech defines spiritual direction as the "cure of souls when it involves the specific needs of one individual."¹¹ Joyce Eblen echoes the individual orientation of spiritual direction: "Spiritual direction is a traditional form of one-to-one pastoral care developed through the centuries, now being rediscovered by the Christian church."¹² Eblen argues that instead of utilizing the resource of spiritual direction, the Protestant church has opted for psychological, therapeutic modes of counseling which are more problem centered as opposed to spiritual direction, which is more "growth oriented."¹³ Eblen identifies two key elements of spiritual direction that are pertinent to mentoring relationships: individual soul-care and an orientation towards spiritual growth. Although churches may offer a variety of classes and small group Bible studies to encourage growth, usually opportunities for individual soul-care are not available in these venues.

¹⁰ Philip Sheldrake, "St. Ignatius of Loyola and Spiritual Direction" in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavinia Byrne (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 100.

¹¹ Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: The Practice of Christian Spirituality* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 34.

¹² Joyce Eblen, "Spiritual Direction and St. Teresa of Avila: Understandings for the Contemporary Practice of Ministry" (PhD diss., The Union Graduate School, 1987), iii.

¹³ Ibid.

While one-to-one pastoral care may be offered during times of crisis, it is not usually for the purpose of on-going spiritual care. Drawing from the tradition of spiritual direction, a spiritual mentoring program should seek to meet the specific needs of individual young adults.

Spiritual direction is distinct from psychotherapy or pastoral counseling in that directees are seeking spiritual growth and transformation as opposed to problem solving or dealing with mental health issues. Barry and Connolly state “spiritual direction differs from moral guidance, psychological counseling, and the practice of confessional, preaching, or healing ministries, though having affinities with them, in that it directly assists individuals in developing and cultivating their personal relationship with God.”¹⁴ While individual therapy and a variety of group discipleship opportunities have much to offer a young adult in the pursuit of wholeness and spiritual health, a spiritual mentoring relationship, drawing from the model of spiritual direction, uniquely offers both the opportunity to address the needs of the individual as well as promote spiritual formation.

In addressing the needs of the individual, spiritual direction seeks to engage the “whole person.” For some, this approach is a refreshing alternative to the compartmentalization that occurs in much of modern psychological treatment.¹⁵ In caring for the individual, spiritual direction does not seek to treat only the spirit of the person, but rather to engage all of his being. Thomas Merton gives a practical illustration, “You don’t go to a spiritual director to take care of your spirit the way you go to a dentist to have him take care of your teeth. The spiritual director is concerned with

¹⁴ Barry and Connolly, *Practice of Spiritual Direction*, ix.

¹⁵ Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction*, 18.

the whole person.”¹⁶ The same should be true of spiritual mentoring: a spiritual mentor should not be confined to dealing with simply psychological or even spiritual issues. Even though a primary purpose of the mentoring relationship is spiritual formation, conversation about spiritual things need not fill the entire meeting time. Spiritual mentoring is grounded in the belief that if God is present in all of one’s life, there is no topic of conversation that is off limits or unworthy of discussion: work, relationships, personal interests and even emotions like stress and worry all make up the whole person.

Anderson and Reese suggest that spiritual mentoring should be “grounded in the ordinary,” meaning that everyday life is an important aspect of the mentoring relationship. Numerous books on spirituality suggest the importance of noticing the hand of God amidst the mundane aspects of life and a role of the mentor is to help one discern this.¹⁷ Anderson and Reese state, “The curriculum for the school of spiritual mentoring is the unfolding story of life as the mentoree lives it,” which is a topic that will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter 6.¹⁸ However, this conversation about everyday life also helps to foster a spirit of friendship, making the mentee feel cared for and known.

Another way in which spiritual mentoring draws from the tradition of spiritual direction, is in seeking to cultivate the habit of paying attention. Part of growing in spiritual formation is learning to pay attention to the presence of God in the whole of one’s life. Barry and Connolly highlight the transforming role that paying attention to

¹⁶ As cited in Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction*, 18.

¹⁷ For example, see Brother Lawrence’s classic work *The Practice of the Presence of God* or Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

¹⁸ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 40.

God plays in the life of the believer: “[Spiritual direction] enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”¹⁹

Spiritual direction suggests that paying attention is the means by which a connection with Jesus Christ is maintained; just as any human relationship thrives when one is attentive to the other, the discipline of being attentive to the presence of Christ enables one to achieve greater depths in this relationship. Ben Campbell Johnson’s definition of a spiritual director could also serve to define a spiritual mentor: “The spiritual director is a person of Christian maturity who has the gift and sense of call to assist others on their spiritual journey. The director serves to aid the directee in paying attention to God.”²⁰ Paying attention is perhaps one of the most basic tasks of the spiritual life, and it is also one of the most difficult. The benefit of paying attention is that one can respond personally and grow in intimacy with God.²¹ Spiritual formation happens as one responds to the reality that God is present in all of one’s life. Scripture also refers to the reality that staying connected to Christ is the key to spiritual growth. John 15 presents the image of God as a vine and people as the branches: as one remains in a state of connection with Christ, his life naturally flows into them and produces

¹⁹ Barry and Connolly, *Spiritual Direction*, 11.

²⁰ Ben C. Johnson, “Spiritual Direction in the Reformed Tradition” in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices*, ed. Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 108.

²¹ William Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 2.

“fruit.” Like a spiritual director, a spiritual mentor seeks to encourage a growing disciple to maintain this connection.

Spiritual direction offers a key insight as to how a mentor can assist people in discovering the presence of God in their lives. One important role of a spiritual director is to ask questions which cultivate introspection and soul-searching.²² These questions, as opposed to statements, encourage self-discovery, as people are often more open to making changes on their own initiative than when they are told to do so. Good questions can lead people in an intentional direction, towards a greater sense of awareness of the presence of God in their lives.

More contemporary models of spiritual direction suggest that the director should ask direct questions about the spiritual life. Barry and Connolly note two key questions to ask to a directee in regards to prayer: “Do you listen to the Lord when you pray?” and “Are you telling him how listening to him makes you feel?”²³ Ben Campbell Johnson suggests beginning the meeting time by asking a question such as “What’s going on in your life with God?” or “How has your prayer been this month?”²⁴ Probing questions about one’s spiritual life have the power to lead the conversation immediately into topics of depth and significance.

²² The ideas contained in this paragraph are drawn from Barry and Connolly, *Spiritual Direction*, 67-69.

²³ Ibid., 70.

²⁴ Johnson, “Spiritual Direction,” 106.

In Henri Nouwen's writing on spiritual direction, he suggests that one of the greatest tasks of a director is to help a person get in touch with her own questions.²⁵ One powerful question Nouwen suggests is to ask to help a person move in this direction is "What is a persistent question at this time in your life?" Nouwen also believes that people will learn to get in touch with their inner lives as they learn to ask questions of their own. Nouwen further suggests, that painful questions are also necessary for spiritual growth saying, "painful questions must be raised, felt and lived."²⁶ Reflecting on this insight and its application to spiritual mentoring relationships, it is critical for the mentor to create an environment of trust, where a mentee will eventually be able to open up and share these more intimate, painful issues. Nouwen suggests some important questions that a person may address over time: "Who am I?" "Where have I come from?" "Where am I going?" "What is prayer?" "Who is God for me?" "Where do I belong?" and "How can I be of service?"²⁷ He asserts the reality that asking these meaningful questions does not always lead to answers, but sometimes to more questions.²⁸ However, as young adulthood is a season of questioning and searching for meaning, a spiritual mentoring relationship may providing an atmosphere of security where one can process these important questions.

²⁵ The substance of this paragraph is based on Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 6-16.

²⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ Ibid.

Nouwen demonstrates that questions also create an hospitable environment.²⁹ Following his thought, the mentor may serve as a host, inquiring about the life of the other. Although the host guides the conversation with questions, the conversation and the focus of the meeting time is on the life of the mentee. The mentee should do the majority of the talking, while the mentor listens attentively. Patricia Hendricks notes that being heard is one of the primary needs of Millennials: “This generation of young people yearns to be listened to—by both their peers and older adults.”³⁰ Her observation has an important application for spiritual mentoring: a mentor who asks powerful questions and listens attentively creates an environment that young adults are longing for---a safe space where they can be heard and receive care.

Spiritual direction suggests two crucial tasks to spiritual mentors: asking good questions and attentive listening. As mentors engage in these tasks, they build an atmosphere of trust, strengthening the mentoring relationship, and pointing the mentees towards a greater awareness of the presence of Christ in their lives. In addition to spiritual direction, three other traditions of guidance will be examined: the Celtic soul-friend, the spiritual friendship of Aelred of Rievaulx and the contemporary Christian coaching paradigm. Each will be explored to glean insights from past and present practices, in order to discover their implications for spiritual mentoring relationships in the church today.

²⁹ Ibid., 6-16

³⁰ Hendricks, *Hungry Souls*, 9.

Celtic Soul-Friendship

In contrast with the more hierarchical relationship that is traditionally associated with spiritual direction, the Celtic *anamchara* or “soul-friend” shared an egalitarian relationship with his companion. When Patrick first brought Christianity to the Irish in 432, Celtic Christianity emerged as a vibrant strand of religion in Ireland in an era when the rest of Europe was experiencing the “Dark Ages.”³¹ *Anamcharas* flourished in this environment, although the origin of the relationship is not completely clear. It is likely that the notion of the *anamchara* was brought to Ireland from literary sources or those who interacted with the desert fathers.³² Another source may have been the role of the Celtic druid who served as a counselor to his tribe.³³ The fact that the native, pagan druid culture already embraced a form of soul care, may have contributed to the easy transition to the Christian idea of a soul-friend. Irish legends suggest that *anamcharas* served as advisors to even kings and that both Saint Patrick and Columba of Iona served in this capacity. Another hypothesis is that soul-friendship developed within the monastic setting in Ireland, for by the sixth century the Irish church could be considered a “monastic church,” with many monks engaging in pastoral care.³⁴ Every ordained monk was expected to be a soul-friend to another.³⁵

³¹ Edward C. Sellner, *Mentoring: The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1990), 66-68.

³² *Ibid.*, 68.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Diarmuid O’Laoghaire “Soul-Friendship” in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavinia Byrne (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990), 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

Some literature suggests that between the sixth and eighth centuries, within Irish monasticism, the concept of a soul-friend was synonymous with that of a spiritual director. Soul-friends began to serve as confessors, and were responsible for offering both wisdom and words of correction to those they directed.³⁶ However, soul-friends were advised to be gentle and humble in their words of rebuke, favoring a milder form of correction, which was more likely to be received over reproof.³⁷ Eventually, the penitential system and the sacrament of reconciliation in Western Europe developed out of the Irish practice of soul-friendship.³⁸

Soul Friendship: Paradigm for Spiritual Mentoring

Edward Sellner believes that the Irish practice of soul-friendship is instructive for mentoring relationships today. He suggests that a modern day “soul-friend” should possess maturity, noting that while younger people are capable of attaining spiritual wisdom, the wisdom that comes from life experience can only come with age.³⁹ Irish soul-friends were also to be known for their wisdom, so that they could serve as mentors to younger people.⁴⁰ One Celtic literary source speaks of a group of youth who met with soul-friends for instruction seven years following their completion of baptism and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 35, referencing various sources.

³⁸ Sellner, *Mentoring*, 63-67.

³⁹ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁰ O’Laoghaire, “Soul Friendship,” 34.

confirmation.⁴¹ While Peachtree Presbyterian offers various programs for discipleship such as small groups and classes, many are peer-oriented and even peer led. Individual relationships with Christian peers may also offer a safe place for young adults to share a confidence or confess their faults, but they may be missing a vital aspect of the wisdom that can come from a spiritual mentor who is mature in faith and seasoned from life experiences.

The Spiritual Friendship of Aelred of Rievaulx

Another historical form of soul care that serves to inform spiritual mentoring relationships today is the spiritual friendship of Aelred of Rievaulx, a twelfth century monk. While he was certainly not the first to address the benefits of friendship, he proposes the idea that there is a “correlation between human friendship and union with God.”⁴² It must be noted that the relationship of spiritual friendship that Aelred proposes is not necessarily a mentoring relationship, but a mutual friendship in which both parties equally build into one another. Mentoring, on the other hand, is a relationship where the mentor primarily focuses upon the needs of the mentee. This is not to say that there cannot be a spirit of reciprocity in the mentoring relationship, but spiritual mentoring is distinctly more one-directional than spiritual friendship.

However, in Aelred’s work, there are also glimpses of a one-directional, mentoring focus in spiritual friendship. One such example is in *The Mirror of Charity*

⁴¹ As cited in O’Loaghaire, “Soul Friendship,” 32.

⁴² This is the title of the dissertation written by Katherine Mari Tepas, “Aelred of Rievaulx: The Correlation between Human Friendship and Union with God” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1992). Many of the general comments on the life and thought of Aelred are drawn from this work.

where Aelred refers to his friend Simon as his model, guide and mentor.⁴³ Another instance is found in *Spiritual Friendship* in the dialogue between Aelred and a youth named Ivo. Aelred encourages Ivo to embrace the reciprocity of their relationship, but due to their age difference, Ivo views Aelred as his mentor and replies, “I am certainly ready to learn, not to teach; not to give, but to receive; to drink in, not to pour out; as indeed my youth demands of me, inexperience compels, and my religious profession exhorts.”⁴⁴ Although Aelred addresses Ivo as his friend, the purpose of their conversation is for Aelred to answer Ivo’s inquiry of the nature of spiritual friendship.

Aelred, a disciple of the Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux, writes with a monastic audience in mind. Although love and friendship were common medieval literary topics, his own work, *Spiritual Friendship*, draws upon Cicero’s thought on friendship, and adds an innovative spiritual emphasis to it, insisting that friendship is a stage towards the love and knowledge of God: “Friendship is a stage bordering upon that perfection which consists in the love and knowledge of God, so that man from being a friend of his fellow man becomes the friend of God, according to the words of the Savior in the Gospel: ‘I will not now call you servants, but my friends’.”⁴⁵

Aelred proposes the sanctifying, spiritual forming nature of human friendship; one learns to become a friend of God through one’s human friendships. Paul J. Wadell notes that discipleship is inherent in spiritual friendship for it is “a way in which people who are committed to growing in Christ help one another imitate Christ and grow in

⁴³ Tepas, “Aelred,” 357, citing *Speculum caritatis (The Mirror of Charity)* 1.34.111.

⁴⁴ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, trans. Mary Eugenia Laker (Washington, D.C.: Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1974), 1.5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.14.

gospel virtues.”⁴⁶ Aelred points to the presence of Christ in the midst of the friendship that enables the friendship itself to grow and be perfected.⁴⁷

Friendship: Implications for Spiritual Mentoring

Aelred’s writing has a direct application to spiritual mentoring relationships today: friendship provides the foundation for the relationship, cultivating a spirit of love and trust. The very model of relationship that Jesus demonstrates to his own disciples is one in which he calls them his friends (Jn 15:15). Aelred reveals that spiritual friendship is an egalitarian relationship and provides a safe place for one to open up and reveal the secrets of the heart: “But what happiness, what security, what joy to have someone to whom you dare to speak on terms of equality as to another self; one to whom you need have no fear to confess your failings; one to whom you can unblushingly make known what progress you have made in the spiritual life; one to whom you can entrust all the secrets of your heart and before whom you can place all your plans!”⁴⁸

While Aelred describes the joy of human companionship amongst fellow monks, his words on friendship reveal the benefits a mentor may bring to the life of a young adult: a listening ear which provides a safe place to share one’s failures, achievements, secrets and dreams for the future. Aelred insists the basis of spiritual friendship is love.

⁴⁶ Paul J. Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 108.

⁴⁷ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 1.1 and 1.10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.11.

This love must be grounded in the love of God which forms the foundation of all spiritual love.⁴⁹

While the journey of faith is a life-long pursuit, young adulthood presents a unique window of opportunity to seek spiritual guidance. This season of life is a time where young adults are searching for meaning, and many are willing and able to invest time in this pursuit. As they are facing transitions, making choices, and desiring to deepen their faith, a wise, trusted spiritual friend may be what they need to navigate the road towards adulthood.

Spiritual friendship emphasizes a more egalitarian form of mentoring relationship, which may be more appealing in the present context which is more skeptical of hierarchy. Spiritual mentors today can glean from these past traditions of spiritual friendship in how they were able to find a way to emphasize camaraderie and companionship, yet also find opportunities to give advice and direction when needed. The spiritual mentoring model suggested in this paper, relies on the principle that people who win the right to be heard through friendship will be more readily received than those who try to impart advice as an authority figure. Yet, a conception of mentoring that is founded on the basis of equality and friendship does not preclude the opportunity to correct or advise within the relationship. The previous examples of spiritual friendship have demonstrated a friend's capacity to share tough words of wisdom, affirming the ancient truth of Proverbs 27:6, "Wounds from a friend can be trusted."

⁴⁹ Ibid., 3.5.

Christian Coaching

A final contemporary form of guidance from which this mentoring program seeks to derive insight is Christian coaching. Christian coaches do not typically operate through ministries within the church, but more often, coaches are trained professionals who offer their services to clients for a fee, much like Christian psychotherapists or other trained counseling professionals. Acknowledging that mentors within the church would not have the benefit of the formal, professional training that coaches receive, this mentoring program seeks to learn from the methodology of this newer tradition of guidance to gain some transferable principles and methods.

Gary Collins uses the image of a “coach” as a horse-drawn carriage to convey the purpose of a Christian coach today, to “get people from where they were to where they wanted to be.”⁵⁰ Tony Stoltzfus reveals the difference between one’s approach when mentoring versus coaching: “When I’m mentoring, I’m teaching a person, letting him draw from me or learn from my experience. When I’m coaching, I’m pushing a person to draw from his or her own resources and experiences. Coaching is helping people learn instead of teaching them.”⁵¹ Stoltzfus contrasts the mentor with the coach suggesting that a mentor offers advice by sharing from his own personal experiences, whereas a coach “draws out the abilities God has placed in someone else.”⁵² The methodology of a coach seeks to lead the person to make a decision through self-discovery, not through giving

⁵⁰ Gary Collins, *Christian Coaching: Helping Others Turn Potential into Reality* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 12.

⁵¹ Tony Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching: The Disciplines, Skills and Heart of a Christian Coach* (Virginia Beach, VA: privately printed, 2005), 10.

⁵² Ibid.

advice. Stoltzfus argues that when people develop their own solutions to problems they are more likely to follow through with the solution than when they are told to do so.⁵³

Gary Collins notes that many mentoring relationships are beginning to look more like coaching relationships in their methodology, yet the difference is that the mentor still perceives himself as the expert, whereas the coach views the client as “the one best able and most likely to find direction and move forward.”⁵⁴ This approach is less hierarchical, as it embraces the potential in the one who is being coached, trusting in their abilities to come up with their own solutions.

Another distinct quality about coaching relationships is that they are growth-centered.⁵⁵ A person enters into a coaching relationship with specific goals in mind and commits to following through with action steps following each session. In coaching, it is the client’s job to choose the goal, which sets the agenda for the meeting.⁵⁶ Stoltzfus highlights how the coach helps the client explore the topic he has chosen and come up with new insights and options.⁵⁷ Using questions, rather than statements, the coach will help the client to define the focus of this goal and formulate more concrete action steps to begin working towards it. Coaches often use the acronym S.M.A.R.T. to remind clients that goals should be specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time-specific.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Collins, *Christian Coaching*, 19.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁶ Stoltzfus, *Leadership Coaching*, 128.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 130.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 136.

Coaching: Transferable Principles

The coaching principle of establishing a growth-oriented focus is one that could be transferable into a less-formal spiritual mentoring relationship. The coaching paradigm is centered upon the client's goals and relies upon the skilled training of the coach to help the client develop a plan for achieving her goals. While a spiritual mentor would not necessarily have the training to function in the same capacity as a certified coach, this growth-oriented mindset could be beneficial for mentoring pairs as they begin their relationship. To establish from the start that one of the purposes of the relationship is to encourage personal and spiritual growth, will help the relationship to stay focused on growth and allow the mentor to explore goal-setting with the mentee. Talking about goals and where the mentee wants to go, will encourage the conversation to move to deeper topics and encourage the young adult to remember that she is on a spiritual journey of transformation. Gleaning from these coaching methods, this author seeks to develop a spiritual mentoring program at Peachtree Presbyterian Church with a growth-oriented focus in mentoring.

A second way a coach approach can be applied to mentoring relationships is through a shift in the relational dynamics between the mentor and mentee. Traditionally, mentoring relationships view the mentor as the teacher, with wisdom to pass on to the mentee. A coach approach to mentoring challenges this idea and shifts to a more peer-to-peer focus.⁵⁹ Similar to the tradition of spiritual friendship, which has a more egalitarian view of the nature of the relationships, coaching acknowledges that both parties bring

⁵⁹ Chad Hall, Bill Copper and Kathryn McElveen, *Faith Coaching: A Conversational Approach to Helping Others Move Forward in Faith* (Hickory, NC: Coach Approach Ministries, 2009), 55.

expertise to the conversation.⁶⁰ However, different from spiritual friendship, the coaching relationship is not an equal exchange between two friends, as the relationship is centered on the needs and goals of the one being coached. Taking a coach approach to mentoring means that the mentor will view the mentee as a peer and allow this person to discover and learn for himself in the context of the relationship, rather than viewing the relationship as an opportunity to give answers or advice.⁶¹

The methodology used in coaching is similar to that of spiritual direction and involves active listening and asking good questions. Bill Copper, a certified coach, states that “powerful questions” enable others to: “take time to think, gain information, promote personal discovery, generate options, uncover obstacles and determine next steps.”⁶² Using this coaching methodology, a mentor would need to shift from the role of telling someone what to do to asking questions that enable the mentee to decide for himself what the next step should be. The coach serves more as a guide, to help oversee the process, asking further questions to help the person clarify and discern the best thing to do. This shift in mindset from “telling to asking” will likely be more readily received by the Millennial generation when applied to mentoring relationships.⁶³

Chad Hall demonstrates that “the present cultural shift toward customization, personalization and do-it-yourself helps explain why coaching is growing in popularity

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 63.

⁶³ Ibid, 64.

and impact.”⁶⁴ The current young adult generation, which has been raised in this culture, is used to products and programs that cater to their individual needs. A coach approach to mentoring which is relational and personal, and which takes a customized learning approach, may address the needs of individuals more effectively.⁶⁵

Furthermore, as this author seeks to establish a mentoring program at Peachtree Presbyterian Church which promotes three emphases: identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living, a coach approach seems to be the best model to guide the younger generation. As young adults seek to establish a sense of identity, a coach approach affirms their potential to make their own decisions and set their own goals, which may lead to a greater sense of confidence in their own abilities. As young adults seek to grow spiritually, a coach approach enables them to set goals and create action steps to achieve this growth. Finally, as young adults seeks to actively join in God’s work in the world and take action steps forward, a coaching model in which mentors support them through asking powerful follow-up questions will likely be better received than a form of guidance that is too directional.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

PART THREE
STRATEGY

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGY FOR CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING A MENTORING PROGRAM

This chapter will describe the strategy used at Peachtree Presbyterian Church to begin a mentoring program. The first phase of the strategy was a “trial run,” tested out with young adult men and women from September 2006 to January 2009. Learning from the successes, failures and challenges of this trial run, a second and more strategic model was developed. In December of 2009, a new mentoring ministry to women called Women Mentoring Women, was officially launched. This chapter will describe the process use to develop the trial run as well as the strategy used to implement the ministry in its current form.

The impetus to begin a young adult mentoring program at Peachtree Presbyterian Church began with a few young adults expressing a the desire to have a spiritual mentor, yet not knowing how to go about finding one. Although the young adults were eager, practically speaking there were a few hurdles to overcome in order for this to happen. Due to the large size of the church, most young adults at Peachtree simply did not know an older adult whom they could ask to mentor them. For this reason, this author sought to create a mentoring program where young adults could apply to be paired with a

mature, Christian mentor from the Peachtree community. Although this approach made the process easier for the Millennial, it also created a few more challenges such as finding quality mentors and deciding how to pair up the individuals with one another.

One approach to mentoring assumes that the mentee will choose her own mentor, or that older mentors will naturally seek out younger people they know and offer their services to them.¹ This conception has the appeal of being more authentic and promoting a greater sense of natural chemistry than attempting to pair two individuals together, who know nothing about each other, for the purpose of spiritual friendship. Joyce Eblen notes the historical example of Teresa of Avila who had better success with the spiritual directors that she chose herself, than those who were appointed to her.² While it is likely that choosing one's own mentor may create a relationship with more natural chemistry, after many conversations with young adults and the young adult leadership team at Peachtree, this author decided that due to the size of Peachtree's congregation and the lack of opportunities to naturally form intergenerational connections, that developing a mentoring program, to which applicants would apply, would be the most realistic strategy for helping to find qualified mentors for the young adults who were seeking guidance.

Role of the Program Coordinator

The first step taken to begin the program was to designate two coordinators from Peachtree's young adult leadership team, who had a passion for this new ministry and who were well connected in the church community, as one of the main responsibilities

¹ For example, see Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring* or Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*.

² Eblen, "Spiritual Direction and Teresa," 127.

for the coordinator was to recruit and select qualified mentors. This author volunteered to coordinate the program for the women, and Clarke Coole decided to coordinate the program for men. The role of each coordinator included the following responsibilities: to recruit and provide an orientation to the mentors, to create an application process, to pair mentors and mentees together and to provide on-going support and resources to the mentoring pairs. In the initial stage of implementation, it was vital to the process that the coordinator had discernment to gauge the spiritual maturity of those who were applying to be mentors, as well as a sense of intuition to help play “match-maker” between the mentor and mentee.

Perhaps the most significant role of the coordinators was to recruit spiritually mature mentors who would be effective in coming alongside young adults to support them and help them grow. The coordinators together discussed possible recruitment strategies to help ensure for that a mentor would be suited for this role. This author’s research on traditions of spiritual guidance provided some helpful insights. The history of spiritual direction and soul-friendship suggests that neither ordination nor special training should be required for giving spiritual guidance to others. While throughout history the clergy have assumed much of the responsibility for the “cure of souls,” the laity has also served in this capacity. However, this does not imply that all people are equally capable of mentoring others—they must possess genuine qualities of character and faith in order to instruct others well. The following advice was given in the process of selecting the Celtic soul-friend, suggesting the invaluable nature of the mentor’s personal character: “When is a person competent to answer for the souls of others?”

When he is competent to answer for his own soul first. When is he capable of correcting others? When in the first place he can correct himself.”³ This insight helped us discover that self-awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses was an important quality for mentors to possess.

A second criteria that emerged from this research was to find mentors who had natural “people skills.” Joyce Eblen’s thesis states that a companionship model of ministry is often more effective than an authority model, suggesting that the best spiritual guides are not those who hold positions of authority, but those who come alongside others as fellow companions.⁴ Using Teresa of Avila as a model, she argues that even though she had no special training “people were drawn to her because of her skills and personality.”⁵ The coordinators sought to recruit mentors in the church who possessed qualities that drew other people in, who were approachable, encouraging, had the ability to ask good questions and listen well. Anderson and Reese provide an apt description of the type of person whom the coordinators sought to recruit:

The spiritual mentor is one, who comes alongside another for a period of time, brief or extended, in partnership with the Holy Spirit, for the explicit task of nurturing spiritual formation in the life of the mentee. The one who comes alongside is not necessarily one who has been evaluated, trained or certified for the technical work of spiritual mentoring but is rather one capable of listening, loving, empowering and shining light on the life of the mentee.⁶

³ As cited in O’Loaghaire, “Soul Friendship,” 32.

⁴ Eblen, “Spiritual Direction and Teresa,” 128.

⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁶ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 50.

To begin the selection process, the coordinators followed the advice of Barry and Connolly who suggest that those who serve as spiritual guides should be “discovered by the community of believers—rather than self-proclaimed—because of the unworldly manner in which they lead their life.”⁷ Therefore, rather than putting out a general announcement expressing a need for mentors, they hand selected individuals and personally invited them to apply to participate. While it took more effort to find mentors using this approach, the goal was to be highly selective in the process, recognizing the importance of the responsibility to serve as a role model and spiritual guide. This careful selection process helped to confirm that the mentors were people of spiritual maturity and integrity, who expressed a sincere desire to build into the lives of others.

The coordinators partnered with spiritual leaders, elders and pastors in the church and began to ask them for their recommendations of wise, trusted people in the congregation who had potential to serve as mentors. As these people were contacted to see if they were interested, they were asked to prayerfully consider the ministry of mentoring a young adult and sent some more information describing the ministry and specifications of the commitment involved. Each potential mentor was given an application asking key questions to help determine her qualifications for the position such as, “Describe your spiritual journey?” “Why do you desire to be a mentor?” “What gifts do you possess that will help you to fulfill this role?” While this process did not guarantee that all mentors were qualified or capable, it was a step to filter out potential problems. For example, these questions helped reveal beneficial qualities, such as when someone described himself a good listener. Conversely, this application process helped

⁷ As cited in Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction*, 21.

to discover applicants who might not be a good fit for the program, such as one who stated he desired to be a mentor because he had much knowledge to impart to the younger generation. Knowing that there was no fool-proof way to verify the mentor's qualifications, the mentor coordinators took a prayerful approach, trusting the guidance of the Holy Spirit to select those who appeared to have spiritual maturity, good listening skills and a heart to serve.

Promoting the Program to Young Adults

Although the program began with a few interested young adults, the next step was to make it available to the entire young adult community at Peachtree. The strategy to promote the program to interested applicants was done through verbal announcements in classes and young adult events, printed and digital communications sent to the church community and a message series. Prior to the launching of the program, the young adult Sunday school classes did a series of messages on relationships. One of these messages focused specifically on the role of mentoring relationships in one's faith journey. This message served as a springboard to announce the mentoring program and gave people an opportunity to sign up to express potential interest, without having to give a firm commitment. This also helped to provide an approximate estimate of how many mentors to begin recruiting.

Young adult applicants to the mentoring program were also asked to fill out a questionnaire in order to get a better picture about their desires for participating in the program. General questions were asked such as "What are you looking for in a mentor?" "What are your goals for your time together?" and "Describe your spiritual journey."

Logistical questions were also asked to assess the practical needs of the relationship: “What time is best for you to meet?” and “Where do you live?” In reality, the practical questions were as important in helping to pair the mentor with mentee as the more philosophical questions.

All applicants to the program seemed to be highly motivated to pursue spiritual growth, yet each had a unique desire for what they were seeking from the mentoring relationship. Some wanted simply to get together to talk about life and faith or to have someone to turn to for guidance. Others desired more structure and used resources to guide their time, such as a book discussion or a Bible study. The variety of responses reflected the different needs represented; some were ready for a greater emphasis on spiritual formation, while others were looking for more practical guidance as they were undergoing life transitions. For example, one applicant who had recently relocated to the Atlanta area and given birth to a new baby, specifically asked to meet with an experienced mother who could encourage her on her new journey into motherhood, and also help her get better connected to the community of faith at Peachtree Presbyterian. Another new believer chose to do a Bible study with his mentor and expressed a desire to have someone in his life to ask basic questions about Christianity.

Mentor Training

Before beginning to meet with their mentees, the mentors were invited to an orientation session. The purpose of the orientation was to equip them with resources, and to help to help them get started. At the orientation, each mentor was given a book on spiritual mentoring to help describe their role as a guide in the life of the young adult.

The orientation also allowed for an opportunity for the mentors to discuss together the functions of this role, and for the coordinator to answer questions and suggest practical steps to begin the new relationship.

The orientation also provided the mentors with a list of things to do together and possible books to read and discuss during their meetings on topics of spiritual formation. However, no set agenda was mandated for the mentoring experience, allowing them the freedom to cultivate the relationship as they saw fit. The initial curriculum options were limited to a few options which had been reviewed by the coordinators. For some, this flexible structure was beneficial, giving them the freedom to focus on the mentee's needs and to adapt accordingly. For others, they expressed a bit of anxiety about the lack of a set "format" for the meetings. For this reason, the coordinators offered to provide on-going support to the mentors as they navigated the structure of their meetings.

Pairing Mentors and Mentees

During the orientation, the mentors also received their assigned mentee. Prior to this meeting, the coordinator carefully read the applications from both mentors and mentees and prayerfully paired them together. Sometimes, the pairings were made through having a personal connection with both individuals and sensing that they might work well together. Other times, logistical questions helped determine a good fit, or the expressed need from a mentee matched the life experiences and strengths of a mentor. At the orientation, each mentor was given the application of their proposed mentee and an opportunity to read through it. During this time, they were able to confirm whether this person appeared to be a good match for them. Of the twenty mentors present at the

orientation, only one mentor felt uneasy about her match. She felt intimidated by the fact that her mentee was a lawyer and was not sure if that would be the right fit, due to her different life experiences. Another mentor, who happened to be a retired lawyer, agreed to switch profiles with her. The orientation provided a place for the mentors to either confirm or make changes to these matches, to ensure that the pairings were done with careful consideration.

An important first step for the mentor was to call the mentee and establish a meeting place and time. Since none of the mentors had met their mentees previously, they were encouraged to use the first few sessions to just get to know one another in a casual setting, such as a coffee shop or restaurant. Some expressed apprehension in immediately moving into conversations about spiritual formation without first building a rapport and foundation of trust. They were advised to begin slowly and to remember that spirituality involves everyday life, which is a perfectly legitimate topic of conversation. As the friendship began to grow, they could move into more personal or spiritual topics.

Both the mentors and mentees were asked to make an initial three month minimum time commitment to meet together and then to reassess the relationship to decide if they would like to continue. Both parties were given permission to dissolve the relationship after the “trial run” if for any reason they felt like it was not a good fit. As in any relationship, trust must be cultivated before one can feel secure to open up, and if for some reason this bond could not be established, it seemed to be in the best interest of both parties to end the relationship. This insight is demonstrated in the writing of Aelred of

Rievaulx, who reinforces the importance of using caution when entering into a spiritual friendship:

For since your friend is the companion of your soul, to whose spirit you join and attach yours, and so associate yourself that you wish to become one instead of two, since he is one to whom you entrust yourself as to another self, from whom you hide nothing, from whom you fear nothing, you should, in the first place, surely choose one who is considered fitted for all this. Then he is to be tried, and so finally admitted.⁸

Aelred identifies the process of choosing a spiritual friend in four stages: selection, probation, admission and perfect harmony.⁹ Since a mentoring program which pairs the mentors with the mentees together does not include a natural selection stage, allowing a short time for both people to discern whether the relationship appeared to be sustainable long term was built into the program. Of the twenty pairs who participated in the program in 2006-2007, only one pair did not continue after the probationary period because the mentee did not feel like she connected with the mentor's personality. All applicants to the program were allowed to continue to assess the relationship as time went on, and were asked to prayerfully re-evaluate its longevity at the end of a calendar year.

Follow-up Care

The coordinators initiated on-going follow-up with the mentors by email, checking in to ask for feedback and to see if they needed any resources to enhance their time together. The mentor coordinators arranged lunches once a quarter for the mentors to meet together as a group, to encourage one another, exchange ideas and share resources. Mentors gave feedback that this time was very helpful, as they were able to

⁸ Aelred, *Spiritual Friendship*, 3.6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.8.

share with one another what was working well and to give suggestions to those who were having difficulties. One mentor, in particular, who was paired with an extremely introverted young woman, was having a hard time keeping the conversation going during their meetings. The mentor, naturally vivacious, and intentional about asking many questions, felt bothered by the awkward moments of silence. The other mentors in the group offered their support, and one suggested that perhaps the young woman was uncomfortable being the primary focus of the conversation. Another advised that perhaps she should develop a bit more structure for their time together using some type of curriculum that they could discuss together, which might enable the young woman to open up in a more gradual, non-threatening way. The mentor left the meeting feeling encouraged with a new approach to implement, and later she reported that the conversation began to flow more freely between the two of them.

The coordinator also stayed connected to the mentees through emailing them occasionally to ask how their mentoring relationship was going, or through casual meetings for coffee to check-in. If a mentee expressed wanting “more” from the relationship, the coordinator would advise them to talk to their mentor about this and suggest that it might be time to explore a discipleship resource together. The young adults often needed encouragement to express their needs and desires to their mentor more directly.

In May 2007, after most pairs had participated in the program for nine months, they were invited to a mentoring appreciation dinner in the home of one of the mentors. In attempts to continue promoting the program, they were also encouraged to invite a

friend who might be interested in participating in the program in the future. At the dinner, the participants in the program were able to visit with one another and had an opportunity to share what were some of the meaningful aspects of the mentoring relationship. This provided another opportunity for people to exchange ideas with one another, and also for new people to catch a vision for what mentoring is all about.

Following the mentoring appreciation dinner, the coordinators established a strategy to begin recruiting more mentors and mentees over the summer months, in order to repeat the same process in the fall of 2007. The coordinators decided that the orientation would include a training, led by Peachtree's Discipleship Pastor, Sharol Hayner. This annual training, would become part of the strategy to provide an on-going way to equip mentors for the task of helping people grow in spiritual formation. It also was a helpful way to provide an environment where new mentors could learn from more seasoned mentors.

A New Ministry and Strategy

While the "trial run" of the mentoring program from 2006-2009 was generally well-received by those who chose to participate, in the second year of the program the coordinators were not as consistent with providing the on-going support to mentoring pairs through regular emails, meetings or lunches to gather the mentors together. Over time, some of the mentoring relationships faded and stopped meeting for various reasons. An additional problem arose of how to continue to recruit additional mentors who were known for their spiritual maturity and way of life.

One of the greatest difficulties that emerged as the program grew was that the responsibilities of the coordinator had become burdensome and unsustainable. Having two people take on the role of recruiting and training mentors, promoting the program, matching the mentoring pairs and providing on-going support to all of the participants in the program was unsustainable long-term. In order to keep the ministry healthy and growing, a new strategy was needed. Each coordinator decided to come up with a different solution. Clarke Coole decided that the men's mentoring program, would be absorbed into a present ministry of the church called IronMen. Instead of continuing to match men together in one-to-one relationships, the younger men who sought mentors were invited to participate in this ministry where they engaged in intergenerational relationships with men who gathered for bible study and sharing life together on a weekly basis. The current members of the young adult mentoring ministry seemed satisfied by this group mentoring strategy, and the young adult mentoring ministry for men was officially dissolved.

The strategy for the women's mentoring program also took a new form. This author, along with Peachtree's Discipleship Pastor, Sharol Hayner, made the decision to gather a team of women together to form a new mentoring ministry for women. For about eight months this team of five women began to meet together monthly to pray for and plan the vision for this new ministry called "Women Mentoring Women." The young adult mentoring program provided a foundation from which to build, keeping much of the same strategy, yet establishing a leadership team who could now share the responsibilities that the coordinator had formerly assumed.

This broader ministry would be open to women of all ages who desired mentoring, recognizing that there are women in all life-stages who are seeking guidance. However, with this author's continued role in young adult ministry, there would be an intentional focus to recruit Millennials to participate, and also to ensure that the new program would take into account their distinct needs and desires. The analysis of this paper will therefore focus on the participation of Millennials in Women Mentoring Women.

Leadership Team Model

The young adult mentoring program at Peachtree from 2006-2009, provided some useful information for Women Mentoring Women in its initial stages. First, a leadership team, led by an organized coordinator, is an essential component of a sustainable ministry strategy. The coordinator in this new model would help the leadership team divide up the many responsibilities, to prevent any one person from becoming overwhelmed. The second lesson learned was that the recruitment of qualified mentors and the pairing of mentors with mentees are time-consuming tasks that need to be done with great thought and care. The leadership team's first goal was to put together an effective recruitment strategy, along with a clear application, selection and pairing process.

Recruiting Mentors

The initial strategy for the recruitment of new mentors was for each member of the leadership team to personally invite people she knew from the church congregation to apply to the program. Following the same criteria used in the young adult mentoring

program, each was encouraged to invite women who were known to be spiritually mature, self-aware and who possessed great people skills. The leadership team members sought out new individuals through the recommendations of people they trusted and made appointments to sit down and meet with these potential applicants.

The mentor application was slightly revised to include a question about church membership, as mentors would be required to become members of Peachtree Presbyterian Church. Knowing that this additional criteria would not guarantee a person's spiritual maturity, it would at least provide an additional safeguard that the person had gone through the membership class at Peachtree and made a public profession of faith, which included assenting to the church's faith statements. The leadership team would carefully review all applications to discern that each person was ready to serve as a mentor.

The Pairing Process

Another policy was developed to provide additional screening and to assist in the pairing process. In addition to filling out an application, every person who applied to the program was required to have a personal interaction with a member of the leadership team before they were matched. If someone applied to the mentoring ministry who was not already known by someone on the leadership team, they made an appointment to get together with this individual to get to know her better. The goal of the meeting was to find out more about who the person is in terms of her personality, interests, spiritual maturity and goals for the mentoring relationship. Occasionally, this personal interaction helped the team member to come to the conclusion that a person was not ready to be

involved in the ministry. Sometimes, an interaction might determine that a person had an abrasive manner that might not be well suited for a mentoring role; or perhaps a mentee was in a place of great need or desperation where the leadership team member discerned that she might need professional counseling instead of mentoring. This careful screening aided in safeguarding that both parties involved were in a healthy place to begin a mentoring relationship.

After applicants had been screened, the leadership team reviewed their profiles and discussed the findings of the face-to-face meetings. Leadership team members who were personally acquainted with individuals considered the possible matches. At times, the leadership team will consult with the Director of Women's Ministries to see whom she would recommend for a pairing as well. Leadership members prayed, asking for wisdom before they made the final decision.

Another new addition to the pairing process was for a leadership team member to personally introduce the pairs to one another to help them get off to a good start. A member of the leadership team attended the first meeting to facilitate the initial introduction of the mentor and mentee, provide resources and answer any questions that the pair might have. In this meeting she reminded them of two important commitments: prioritizing their meetings together and clearly communicating with one another throughout the relationship. She asked them to commit to meeting together three times initially to develop a rapport before determining whether they would like to continue together for a year-long commitment. She explained that the mentoring pair will have

access to a coach from the leadership team, who will check-in with them, be available to answer questions and support them along the way.

Implementing the Ministry

In 2009-2010, Women Mentoring Women hosted three events that became the paradigm for its on-going ministry. Prior to the official launch of the ministry, the leadership team actively recruited twenty new mentors and invited them to a training lunch in October 2009. The goal of the lunch was to debut the concept of the new ministry and equip these potential mentors to serve in the ministry. A licensed counselor gave a talk about spiritual guidance to these mentors and each person was provided with Anderson and Reese's book, *Spiritual Mentoring*, as a resource. They were encouraged to attend the official kick-off event for Women Mentoring Women in December 2009.

In December 2009, the leadership team decided hosted the first Women's Christmas Tea, which served as the kick-off event for the ministry. The event was promoted throughout the church for several months, as an event for anyone who was interested in participating in the ministry as a mentor or mentee. The team developed a new logo, along with a vision statement to include in the promotional materials: "Women Mentoring Women pair mentors who are a little further along in their faith journey and life experiences with mentees in order to support, encourage, guide, and challenge them in their life and faith." The event was promoted in all of the different channels of communication throughout the church: bulletins, print material, the website and emails. The young adult ministry at Peachtree made sure to spread the word to Millennials through its events and communications as well. The promotion of the Women's

Christmas Tea was effective, with forty women in attendance. The tea offered a time for women to connect with one another and featured an inspirational speaker, who addressed the importance of mentoring relationships. Women were encouraged to fill out an application to be a part of the ministry before they left the tea. Twenty-two new applications were received from this gathering, primarily from young adult mentees, and a few from mentors. An unanticipated result of this event, which eventually helped in the pairing process, was that a few women added a request on their application to be paired with a particular mentor they had met at the tea.

Promoting the Women's Christmas Tea throughout the church and posting the mentoring application to the church's website had the additional advantage of spreading the word about the new mentoring ministry. Women who were interested in the ministry but could not attend the tea were then able to submit new applications after the event. In January 2010, after taking time to meet with and screen each individual who had applied, the team gathered to review the applications and prayerfully matched together around forty mentoring pairs or groups. Since there were more mentees than mentors who applied, a group mentoring option was provided, where one mentor met with two mentees at the same time.

In order to provide follow-up care and a venue for women to continue to connect with the ministry, Women Mentoring Women hosted a third event in the spring of 2010. It was called a "Spring Social" for mentors and mentees to attend together. At this event, they were able to meet other mentoring pairs, share stories with one another and exchange ideas about what was helping their relationships to thrive. At the social, they

received an updated list of suggested resources and ideas that were working well, based on feedback coaches had received from the pairs. About half of the mentoring pairs were able to attend this gathering.

For the first two years, these three gatherings served as a template for Women Mentoring Women's ministry model. In the fall of 2010, they hosted another training for the mentors. A licensed counselor and spiritual director came to the meeting and gave a presentation about healthy boundaries in relationships, and how to listen for God's presence in the midst of mentoring. The vision for this meeting was to equip and provide additional resources to help these relationships grow and thrive. New mentors were actively recruited by the leadership team and were invited to attend this training alongside current mentors.

In December 2010, Women Mentoring Women offered the second Women's Christmas Tea. This event was once again promoted widely throughout the church and used as an opportunity to encourage more people to join the ministry. The current mentoring pairs were encouraged to invite friends to participate as well. A woman with years of experience in mentoring was invited to speak and over sixty women were in attendance for the event. Following the second Christmas Tea, the ministry grew from forty to sixty mentoring pairs. Based on feedback from the mentoring triads, in year two of the program, the decision was made to move away from mentoring triads because of the logistical difficulties of coordinating three people's schedules together.

Another Spring Social was held in 2011, with the purpose of providing continued connections and inspiration for the mentoring pairs. This event continued to be well-

received by those who attended. One of the greatest benefits of this gathering is that it helps to establish a larger sense of community amongst women in the ministry. It also facilitates natural interactions in which women may learn from one another's experiences.

In sum, the overall strategy of Women Mentoring Women relies on several key principles: a strong and committed leadership team, a proactive recruitment strategy, a personalized approach to matching mentoring pairs, an annual promotional campaign and strategic events. Each of these events serves a different purpose. The Christmas Tea serves as the primary vehicle to invite new people to join the ministry and learn more about mentoring. The Spring Social is intended to encourage and provide new ideas for mentoring pairs, as well as instill a sense of community amongst the members of Women Mentoring Women. Finally, the purpose of the mentor training is to prepare mentors with tools and resources that will enable them to effectively care for and build into the lives of younger women, as they seek to help them to grow in their faith. The next chapter will examine some of the resources and curriculum options that helped provide a sense of structure to this mentoring format.

CHAPTER 6

CURRICULUM FOR SPIRITUAL MENTORING

Women Mentoring Women operates under the principle that there is a need for variety and flexibility in the format of the mentoring relationship. Each pair is encouraged to focus their time around the expressed needs of the mentee, but is given the freedom to decide exactly how they will spend their time together. As each person has different needs, desires, personalities and areas for growth, no two relationships will necessarily look the same. The ministry provides the pairs with a list of suggested activities to do together, as well as a list of recommended resources should they choose to use curriculum in their time together.

The Need for Structure

Although there is freedom to center the meeting time around the expressed needs of the mentee, the meeting time should have a sense of structure and intentionality. The mentoring pair should determine a clear purpose for their meetings, whether it is to talk about issues in the life of the mentee or to engage in a study together. At the beginning, it is important for the mentor to ask the mentee what she is hoping to get out of this

program, and more specifically, to name her goals and desires for their time together. The mentors and mentees should come prepared for the time together, especially if this involves reading a book or preparing for a bible study. However, even in a relationship that is discussion-oriented, rather than curriculum-based, each party should come to the meeting prepared. Mentees should take some time to reflect about some of the things they would like to talk about with their mentors. Similarly, mentors should be prepared to ask thoughtful questions that will help the mentee to open up or to think more deeply about her life. The mentor might also want to take some notes after the meeting so that she can be intentional with following up on the things they discussed in the prior session.

The Life of the Mentee as Curriculum

Women Mentoring Women suggests that the primary “curriculum” to guide the mentoring relationship is the life of the mentee. Anderson and Reese explain, “The curriculum for the school of spiritual mentoring is the unfolding story of life as the mentoree lives it.”¹ As the mentor and mentee discuss life, the mentor is there to ask good questions that will help the mentee talk about what is going on in her life. Sometimes, there might be a problem to address, a decision to be made or a situation the mentee needs to process with another person who will listen attentively, encourage her or offer words of advice or support as needed. Anderson and Reese further explain the power of the mentor’s questions: “. . . the gentle or firm probing of a mentor’s questions draw us back to the central action of spirituality: to pay attention for the presence of God

¹ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 40.

in everything.”² For the Millennials who participate in the program, it is this organic, conversational approach that seems to be the most effective component in building the relationship and encouraging spiritual dialogue.

It is important for these relationships to discover that paying attention to the presence of God in everything is one of the most essential tasks of the spiritual life. They do not need not do a bible study together for the relationship to serve a “spiritual purpose.” In fact, many pairs discover the presence of God in the midst of the relationship as they talk about everyday life and learn to daily recognize and rely upon the presence of God in their lives. Similarly, it is important for the mentor to help direct the conversation in such a way that the mentee learns the discipline of looking for God’s presence in everything. Perhaps when a mentee shares about her week, the mentor could follow up with a question such as, “Where did you sense God’s presence with you this week?” Or “Since our last meeting together, how have you experienced God’s presence in your life?” It is vital for the mentors to learn to incorporate questions such as these into the conversation, so that the discipline of paying attention to God becomes a natural part of the mentoring relationship.

Written Curriculum Options

Should pairs decide to use a written curriculum to help guide their time together, Women Mentoring Women encourages participants to use resources that emphasize three broad categories: identify formation, spiritual growth and missional living. These emphases take into consideration the needs and desires of the Millennial generation, as

² Ibid.

well as the theological emphasis of transformation, with the goal of helping to prepare young people to live out their faith in the world around them. This paper has explored how young adulthood is a season of identity exploration and meaning making. It has addressed the biblical and theological basis for viewing the Christian life as a transformational journey, where one is in constant pursuit of spiritual growth. Finally, a goal of this mentoring ministry is that it would inspire people towards missional living: as a young adult discerns his own unique identity, and strives to grow spiritually, she will see herself on mission with God, seeking to join in God's work in the world in the distinct way that is suited to her own giftedness and sense of calling. Therefore, *Women Mentoring Women* provides a list of suggested resources for people who desire to use written curriculum to explore these three topics.

For pairs who choose to focus on the topic of identity formation, the primary text *Women Mentoring Women* recommends is *Living Your Strengths: Discover Your Talents and Inspire Your Community* by Winseman, Clifton and Liesveld. This book also contains a code for the participant to take Gallup's StrengthsFinder assessment, which provides a personalized profile of the individual's top strengths. The companion book, uses scriptural examples of each strength and focuses on how discovering one's strengths enables a person to move forward to live out her calling in the world. A second book on the list that deals with the subject of identity formation, is *Freefall to Fly: A Breathtaking Journey toward a Life of Meaning* by Rebekah Lyons. This book is a personal narrative of a woman's quest to discover her gifts and live out her own unique calling in the world.

It also has a companion workbook, with bible study notes for a mentoring pair to work through.

To encourage spiritual growth in mentoring relationships, *Women Mentoring Women* provides a rather extensive list of suggested resources. As most Christian literature and bible studies fall into the category of encouraging spiritual growth, this is a broad category with many possibilities. A mentor should help narrow the choices by asking the mentee to identify an area in her life where she desires to see growth. For example, perhaps she would like to learn more about spiritual disciplines or focus on a particular character trait such as patience or love. She then can explore the curriculum list in search of a book or bible study that is well-suited to this growth area.

The final category of focus in the curriculum is missional living, or joining in God's mission in the world. The purpose of this emphasis is to help people to discover that the Christian life is meant to be lived in partnership with God, as God invites people to join in his work in their communities and around the world. *Women Mentoring Women* recommends various resources to encourage pairs to discuss how they might become more missional in their focus. Titles that explore these topics include, but are not limited to, *A Hole in Our Gospel* by Richard Stearns and *Get Off Your Donkey* by Reggie McNeal.

The mentor in particular, is encouraged to keep the three emphases of identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living in mind as the pair journeys together. Choosing curriculum based on these categories and steering the conversation to address these deeper issues will enable the relationship to stay focused on the greater purpose of

the mentoring relationship. This focus will also help prevent the relationship from merely becoming a social endeavor, without a clear sense of direction.

Life Planning Curriculum

One resource that the ministry recommends that is particularly effective in the context of the mentoring relationships with Millennials is *Storyline* by Donald Miller. *Storyline* can be used in both one-to-one and group mentoring formats. This life planning tool contains a variety of exercises that enables people to chronicle and share their stories, to become more aware of the presence of God in the midst of these stories, and to discover a greater sense of purpose in life. This resource focuses on the subject of the life of the mentee as curriculum, and also incorporates the three themes of identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living.

Storyline is published in the format of a workbook, and participants move through modules where they complete exercises that enable them to reflect upon their past, but also to plan for their present and future. It is a helpful tool to use for mentoring pairs who are first getting started together because it begins with an opportunity to share life stories with one another. Taking time to listen and understand another person's history helps to create a sense of being known and understood in the relationship. Sharing life stories also fosters a culture where deeper sharing is a natural part of the relationship.

The exercise in the first module is to identify the positive and negative "turns" in one's story, which are pivotal moments that have deeply shaped a person's life. Miller gives the examples of winning the spelling bee or finding a soul mate as examples of

positive turns and losing a job, a divorce, or loss of a loved one as negative turns.³ In module two, these turning points are then plotted on a timeline, in order to view them in the context of one's overall life story.

The first two modules of Storyline are identity forming exercises. Sharing stories that include one's deepest moments of joy and pain is an effective way to motivate people to open up and be vulnerable with one another. It also leads to some deeper soul-searching, enabling a person to identify events in their lives that have had the greatest impact upon them. It may lead them to make some connections as to how these events have led them to become the people who they are today, and also to begin to identify how these "turns" have shaped their sense of purpose in life.

Module three provides an opportunity to search for a redemptive perspective on the negative turns in one's story. This exercise is based upon holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's understanding that people find healing in their suffering as they are able to identify a redemptive perspective on their suffering. Furthermore, Miller draws from the biblical story of Joseph, who was able to see that the suffering in his life is what God used to prepare him to be in a position to save many people's lives (Gen. 50:20). Looking for the way that God has brought something good out of a hardship in one's life can be a faith-strengthening exercise. As people begin to search for hidden blessings in the midst of the trials of their lives, they begin to see the goodness of God in everything and discover the truth of Romans 8:28, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose." While the entire *Storyline*

³ Donald Miller, *Storyline: Finding Your Subplot in God's Story* (Nashville: Donald Miller Words, LLC, 2012), 27

process could be perceived as an opportunity to engage in spiritual growth, module three is perhaps the greatest faith strengthening exercise in the process. As one begins to recognize that there is a greater purpose in the midst of suffering, she begins to rely upon and trust in the goodness of God.

Module four encourages a person to identify the most important roles in her life. For example, one might describe herself as a wife, mom, daughter, lawyer, activist, athlete or spiritual being. After listing all of the roles a person plays, she then chooses the top five roles she plays, in terms of their importance to her. This exercise involves a process of evaluating one's values, of pondering what is of lasting importance and carefully determining how one wants to focus her life. In this exercise, a mentor should ask some probing questions to help the mentee confirm which roles will bring the greatest sense of meaning and purpose to her life.

The next several modules provide exercises that assist a person in defining a sense of meaning, purpose and calling in the world. This section of *Storyline*, engages with the topic of "missional living." Although Miller never uses the term "missional living," the exercises provided are intended to propel people forward to actively live out their faith and calling, joining in the work that God is doing in the world. As this mentoring program seeks to aid women in finding the place where they can best join in God's work, these exercises provide a process to move a person forward into this more specific calling.

Once a mentee has completed module four and identified some of the unique roles she plays, she is ready to move through module five, which is an exercise in naming

one's desires. Miller proposes to ask the question: "What do you want?" as a way of beginning to think about the desires of one's heart when it comes to the roles she plays. For example, she "What do you want as a lawyer?" or "What do you want as a spiritual being?" Miller advises the participant to think of these ambitions through a lens of serving others and "saving many lives."⁴ He states that God designed people to be distracted by noble desires, and that the desires that are outwardly focused begin to fill a person's life with a greater sense of meaning and purpose.⁵

Naming one's desires and ambitions can be a challenging endeavor for some, and the assistance of a wise mentor, who can ask questions to help her in this process, will be beneficial. In module six, Miller invites *Storyline* participants to engage in another creative exercise called "What If?" He encourages people who are moving through *Storyline* in a guided or group setting to allow others to participate in this creative process. The goal is to come up with "inciting incidents" which will move a person to take action on their ambitions. For example, if a person has the ambition to build into the next generation and mentor students, her inciting incident might be to contact a volunteer organization where she could volunteer as a "big sister." The "What If" exercise is the process of brainstorming a list of possible inciting incidents, even ones that might be challenging to achieve, in order to come up with a list of possibilities. Following this exercise, the participant then chooses from this list the inciting incident that he intends to put into action. Inciting incidents become action steps that move people toward their goal of living into their larger ambitions for their lives.

⁴ Ibid., 54.

⁵ Ibid., 56.

A mentoring relationship is a great vehicle for this curriculum because it provides both the accountability and the encouragement that people often need to make movement in their lives. Mentors can follow-up with mentees to see how they have progressed, and whether they have taken the step to act on their inciting incidents. Or they may offer support by asking how they can pray for and encourage the mentee in the process of taking these steps forward.

Module seven asks the participant to anticipate the obstacles that might come their way as they strive to move forward. Miller explains the purpose of this exercise: “As we move forward in creating our Storylines, we want to anticipate what kind of conflict we’ll encounter for each of our ambitions. There are two reasons to do this, the first is so we won’t be blindsided, and the second is because we want to reflect on the redemptive aspects of the conflict we endure.”⁶ For each role and ambition, the *Storyline* participant is asked to identify the following: physical challenges, characteristics to develop, financial challenges, skill deficiencies, relational complications, and how the conflict can be redemptive.⁷ In going through this process, one will continue to learn more about herself, as she discovers the things that have the potential of getting in the way of achieving her goals. Furthermore, the act of naming how the struggle of working through these conflicts can be redemptive, may ultimately remind the participant of the goodness of God in the midst of the struggle.

The final step in the *Storyline* process is to envision a climactic scene. Module eight provides the mentee with “some visual points on the horizon to move toward. The

⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁷ Ibid., 86-87.

question to ask when creating a climactic scene is this: What scene could only take place after my ambition is reached?”⁸ Miller argues that climactic scenes are more motivating than written goals because they give someone a picture to visualize.⁹ A person can begin to imagine what it would look like and feel like to arrive at the scene they have envisioned when they have taken the risk to achieve their ambitions.

Not only does *Storyline* achieve the three goals of the mentoring relationship, to further the process of identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living, but it also focuses on the individual’s life as the primary curriculum. It provides a structured way to talk about the deeper parts of life, which can be beneficial for pairs who are not sure how to get started doing this. In a season of life where young adults are often in need of safe places to process their lives, but aren’t sure where to find them, *Storyline* creates a context in which to do this. In many ways, it forces people to take a look at places in their lives that they might not easily delve into with a mentor, in particular the turning points that have profoundly shaped them.

Storyline is also a helpful tool for the mentor who enters into the process alongside the *Storyline* participant, serving as a guide. *Storyline* provides a template for her to follow as she seeks to put into practice the things she has learned from traditions of guidance. Like a spiritual director, she should ask questions to help the person discern the presence of God in the midst of her negative turns. Like a coach, she should ask probing questions that enable the person to create inciting incidents and follow through with these action steps. As mentoring pairs move through *Storyline*, they experience an

⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁹ Ibid., 90-91.

environment that is similar to coaching. The mentee, like the coachee, is responsible for setting her goals, which Miller calls “ambitions,” and also for creating the action steps, which are the “inciting incidents.” However, the mentor, who operates without the training of a certified coach, has the benefit of a structured template that is easy to follow, to give her confidence as she seeks to guide the mentee through the process.

For these reasons, *Storyline* has been utilized in group mentoring settings as well, to allow more young adult mentees to experience this powerful process. While Women Mentoring Women offers mentoring to women of all ages, in order to focus on the needs of Millennials, three *Storyline* mentoring groups were created for and tested by young adults from 2013-2014. Following this experience, and the positive feedback from the young adults who participated, it is the recommendation of this paper that *Storyline* groups become a regular part of the Women Mentoring Women offerings. The next chapter will assess and evaluate the strengths and weakness of Women Mentoring Women and suggest areas for future growth and improvement, which includes offering more *Storyline* mentoring groups.

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAM

Learning valuable lessons from a previous attempt to implement a young adult mentoring program at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Women Mentoring Women began its ministry with strategic, foundational principles in place. A leadership team, who would share the responsibilities of running the ministry, was essential to a ministry model that would be effective and sustainable long-term. They needed a clear plan to make the process of recruiting and screening new mentors more manageable. In addition, the new leadership team made some changes, such as adding a personalized approach to the application process and the facilitation of pairing people together. They created a coaching system, in which each member of the team shared in the responsibility of follow-up care, with the intention of monitoring the health of the ministry and ensuring that the relationships were running smoothly. With these intentional modifications, the ministry began with a strong foundation.

In the first two years of its existence, the leadership team of Women Mentoring Women developed and implemented a ministry plan with a clear vision and organizational structure that ran well. Women Mentoring Women held three annual

events, each with a distinct purpose: a fall gathering to train mentors, a Christmas event to promote the ministry to the church and a spring social to encourage and equip mentoring pairs. With this ministry model in place, the ministry experienced a fifty percent growth rate from year one to year two, and grew from forty to sixty mentoring pairs.

In the third year of Women Mentoring Women, the purpose of the Christmas Tea changed, and in retrospect, may have caused the ministry to lose some momentum. The church decided to invite a well-known author to speak at the Christmas Tea, who focused her talk around the ideas in her new book, as opposed to the topic of mentoring. This change shifted the focus of the tea from centering on the mentoring ministry to becoming an outreach event to women at Peachtree and the surrounding community. Therefore, the decision was made that the tea would no longer highlight only Women Mentoring Women, but rather would feature all of the women's ministries at the church, with the hope of providing women with multiple opportunities to become more connected at the church. This also effected the promotional strategy, as the tea was marketed as an event for women to gather in community, hear an inspirational message and celebrate the Christmas season together.

While there was much excitement around this event, the new vision for the event had some repercussions on the mentoring ministry. Although the event grew from sixty to over two hundred in attendance, from 2010 to 2011, the response to the mentoring ministry was minimal, yielding only a few applications following the event. Therefore in January 2012, only three mentoring pairs were added to the ministry. In essence, the

ministry lost the tea as its primary vehicle to market the ministry and recruit new members.

The change to the vision for the tea had some secondary consequences to the mentoring ministry. In 2011, even though the vision for the Christmas Tea was expanded to include all women of the church, it was the leadership team of Women Mentoring Women who remained responsible for orchestrating the details of this larger scale event. As a result of pouring an incredible amount of time and energy into the planning for this event, they chose not to host a training for the mentors in the fall. While it seemed as though the present mentors were “doing fine” and did not necessarily need a training, losing this opportunity to connect with the mentors may have been an inadvertent step towards a more lax and less-effective approach of caring for current mentors and equipping new mentors.

Perhaps the greatest ramification of the change in focus to the tea is that without an annual event to promote and recruit new members, the ministry has stopped growing. From December 2011 to January 2015, the Women Mentoring Women ministry has maintained a membership of around sixty mentoring pairs. In January 2015, the ministry reported sixty-two active mentoring pairs on their membership list. Although new people apply to the program every few months, for every new pair that is added, it seems as though another pair stops meeting together. Overall, the ministry has been maintained its numbers, but it is no longer experiencing growth.

Concerned about the lack of growth in the ministry, in October 2014, the leadership team decided to assess how the ministry was doing and conducted a survey to

get feedback from the mentors and mentees. Recognizing that the ministry is in a place where some changes need to be made, this paper will first will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Women Mentoring Women in its current state, address the findings of the survey, and finally recommend some suggestions for growing and improving the ministry.

Strengths of the Ministry

The greatest strength of Women Mentoring Women is the leadership team that has guided the ministry from 2009 to 2015. Over this time, two highly qualified coordinators have each served a three year term, overseeing and guiding the leadership team, and a third coordinator has recently been appointed to lead the team in 2015. Each has used her unique strengths and gifts to provide a clear sense of direction for the team and help them share in the leadership of the ministry.

The team is a cohesive unit, with four additional members, who are passionate about the ministry and who take a very prayerful, discerning, and personal approach in making the mentoring connections. While all members on the leadership team commit to a two year term when they begin, there has been no limit set for the number of years they are allowed to serve. As a member chooses to roll off the team, the group members prayerfully invite another member to join the team. The gradual manner of transitioning people on and off of the leadership team has been done in such a way that it has kept a sense of unity and camaraderie amongst the team members. This familial leadership culture spills over into the atmosphere that the ministry creates for those who join it. This author, who now serves as the Director of Women's Ministries, has been able to

experience the leadership culture first hand, serving as an advisor to this group, attending the leadership meetings and offering suggestions as needed.

A second strength of the ministry is its personalized approach to the application and pairing process. They give careful attention to get to know each person who applies to the ministry, meeting with each person face-to-face and thoroughly reviewing and discussing the applications before pairing people together. The natural chemistry and sense of connection between so many of the pairs is a direct result of this personalized approach. They continue to add a personal touch to the pairs getting off to a successful start by sending a coach to facilitate the introduction of the pair. The coach then attempts to follow-up with pairs to from time to time to check-in with them and continue this customized approach of caring for the members of the ministry.

A third strength of the ministry has been the overall satisfaction of many people who participate in it. The leadership team often receives feedback from mentors and mentees who feel like the pairing was a “great match.” The satisfaction rate is demonstrated in the number of women who choose to continue in the ministry for several years. Forty-three percent of the women who responded to the survey stated that they had been meeting together for two or more years. Mentees often share how their mentors have helped them grow in their faith and have been a source of encouragement in their lives. Mentors also confirm that the relationships are beneficial to them, that they too are greatly blessed by the ways they learn from their mentees. This feedback continues to reinforce that the careful efforts of matching people together is bringing about many relationships that are growing and thriving.

Weaknesses of the Ministry

Currently, the greatest weakness of Women Mentoring Women is the visibility of the ministry. Many women at Peachtree do not even know it exists, as there have not been any active campaigns to promote the ministry since 2011. Most women find out about the ministry through word of mouth or through visiting the church's website when looking for opportunities to get more connected at the church. Since the Women's Christmas Tea is no longer a gathering that is associated with the mentoring ministry, it has lost its primary platform to spread the word and help recruit new people into the ministry. The ministry has made a few attempts to become more visible, such as having new flyers printed and an information table set up on Sunday mornings, which have yielded only a few new applicants to the ministry. However, for the past several years, Women Mentoring Women has not offered an environment to demonstrate a compelling vision for why women should become involved in the ministry.

A second weakness of the program in its current state is the lack of opportunities for mentors to be trained. The ministry has ceased offering an annual training or even a clear process to help equip new mentors as they are getting started. While the pool of mentors who volunteer to serve are usually spiritually mature and naturally capable, a more strategic manner of equipping and training them would likely make them more confident and prepared for their on-going role as a spiritual mentor. The opportunity for training might also provide reassurance to someone who is hesitant to become a mentor, knowing that she will have an opportunity to be intentionally prepared for her role.

Survey Results

In October 2014, a survey was sent to all active members of Women Mentoring Women through surveymonkey.com. Of the sixty-two women who received the survey, twenty-three responded. This paper will address the responses that yielded the most significant findings. One question that was intended to help the team discern how to better promote the ministry to new members was “How did you find out about Women Mentoring Women?” The majority of women had heard about the ministry through word of mouth recommendations, from current mentoring pairs (37 percent) or a church staff member (21 percent). Twenty-six percent had found the ministry through the website and only 16 percent had heard about it through the Christmas Tea. While the latter finding was lower than anticipated, the team concluded this was likely because the Christmas Tea had not actively promoted the ministry for several years, and the newer people who were joining the ministry had likely found out about it through the other means listed.

In order to determine the best methods of follow-up care, the survey asked the question “How can the WMW Leadership Team best support you in your mentoring relationship?” The results demonstrated the following preferences: trainings (14 percent), yearly socials to share ideas and ask questions (67 percent), and monthly email with resource options (29 percent). These findings confirmed that the Spring Social was an effective method of providing support to the mentoring pairs and should be continued. The biggest surprise of these findings was that no one responded that they would like a monthly check-in via phone call or email from a member of the leadership team. This

confirmed the hunch from the leadership team members that though their intention was to demonstrate a personalized approach to caring for the pairs, this method of care the coaches offered was not being well-received and perhaps needed to be re-evaluated. However, the fact that almost 30 percent preferred to receive a monthly email with resource options provided a new method for the leadership team to try in lieu of the general check-ins.

Although it was only a small percentage who responded in favor of adding a mentor training, the leadership team concluded that these findings might not accurately represent the desires of the mentors as a whole. The first reason for this hypothesis is that the survey did not ask for a person to identify if she was a mentor or mentee. Therefore, there is no way of knowing how many of these responses came from mentors. Second, the survey responses accounted for less than half of Women Mentoring Women's membership, so there are many more mentors to take into account than those who responded to this survey. In discussing the overall effectiveness of the ministry, the leadership team came to the conclusion that offering a mentoring training, as they had done in the past, should be a vital part of the ministry as it seeks to adequately equip and prepare women for the task of guiding others. An annual training, could also serve as a catalyst for recruiting new mentors, as the leadership team could focus their efforts on recruitment with the goal of inviting women to attend this meeting.

In order to determine the level of satisfaction and effectiveness of the ministry the survey asked two additional questions: "Would you recommend Women Mentoring Women to friends and other women at the church," to which one hundred percent

responded in the affirmative. However, the second question, “Evaluate this statement— My mentoring relationship plays an important part in my life,” yielded conflicting results. The majority of the results were positive, 39 percent strongly agreed and 30 percent agreed. However, 22 percent felt neutral about the statement and nine percent strongly disagreed. This significant level of neutral to negative feelings about the importance of the mentoring relationship is noteworthy. Unfortunately, none of the survey respondents chose to elaborate on their response in the comment section, so the survey results cannot account for the reason for the neutral and negative responses. Furthermore, these results seem to be at odds with the findings that 100 percent expressed a willingness to recommend the ministry to a friend, and the positive feedback that the ministry often receives from its active members. However, the survey’s feedback suggests that greater efforts to provide care internally for those who are already involved in the ministry also needs to be considered. To move toward the goal of better internal care, the changes of offering an annual mentor training and sending out a monthly email with suggested resources are two methods that should implemented.

The open-ended question at the end of the survey, “What suggestions do you have for improving or enhancing this mentoring ministry?” also produced some beneficial insights. Two responses reinforced that continued promotion is needed: “The more women we reach with the good news about this ministry the better. There are women of all types who don’t quite know how to find this kind of friend on their own.” Another said, “Those of us who have been blessed by this ministry need to actively seek women to participate.” Another insight that may prove instructive was a comment to limit the

mentoring relationship to a one year time period. The original design of the ministry included the recommendation that the mentoring pair meet together for one year. However, there has been freedom for a pair to continue meeting beyond this time frame if they desire.

The most negative feedback came from two respondents with similar responses. Each gave a long narrative on their survey about their mentor who suddenly stopped reaching out to them. Each expressed disappointment that the relationship had ended abruptly and without any explanation. One respondent therefore asked for more careful screening of the mentors, to make sure they had the desire to participate in the ministry, and the other recommended more intentional follow-up with the mentors to ensure that they were reaching out to their mentees. In discussing these findings, although the leadership team felt that the screening process had been done with great consideration, the latter insight reinforced once again the importance of equipping mentors regularly, through annual trainings and reminding them of the importance of taking the lead to reach out to their mentees.

Suggestions for Growth and Improvement

The first recommendation for the growth of the ministry is to reinstate a strategy for promotion and visibility. Given the initial success of Women Mentoring Women when it promoted the ministry through an annual event, it is probable that a new women's event focused on mentoring, similar to the original vision or the Women's Christmas Tea would yield similar results. Planning this event in February or March might allow the ministry to capitalize on the Women's Christmas Tea, which now consistently has 400

women in attendance, as a place promote the mentoring event, by passing out flyers to invite women to attend. Giving some space between the two offerings might also encourage women to attend both.

The promotional campaign for the event should include church-wide communications through the website, bulletin, email distribution lists and social media. Another promotional tactic would be to have a mentoring pair share about their experience through a video or personal interview in one of the worship services a few weeks prior to the event. Allowing people to hear a story of how the ministry has had an impact on someone's life is often a compelling way to encourage other people to respond. Furthermore, following the previous successful promotional campaign, the promotional materials should include a deadline for people to turn in their applications for the mentoring ministry. This way, if someone is unable to attend the event, they can still turn in an application to join the program.

A successful promotional campaign will enable the ministry to once again host an event where they can create an environment to share about the impact of mentoring relationships. Creating an event for women only, such as a "Coffee Talk" with coffee, desserts, and a featured speaker, who can bring to life the benefits of mentoring relationships, offers an inviting place to introduce women to the ministry. Furthermore, this is a great opportunity to invite a mentoring pair to share firsthand the role this relationship has played in their lives.

A second recommendation that might help Women Mentoring Women to grow is move away from a model with "rolling admissions" to a ministry model where people

can only join the program once or twice a year. Currently, women may apply to join the ministry whenever they want. Typically, a new mentee applies to the program every few months, and the leadership team then responds by actively recruiting a new mentor for her, a process that often takes up to few weeks to accomplish. While most mentees understand that the process takes time, there have been a few mentees who have been frustrated by how long it has taken for the team to find a mentor for her. At the slow-rate of applicants, this method of matching people has been sustainable for the leadership team. However, it is not likely a model that encourages growth.

The initial recommendation to galvanize some energy around the ministry, is to move to a model where there is only one time each the year in which people may apply to the ministry and to connect this time with the annual promotional event. The first advantage to this idea is that it will streamline the process of recruitment for the leadership team. There will be only one time of the year in which the leadership team needs to go into active recruitment mode, as opposed to looking for one new mentor at a time. During this season, Women Mentoring Women can also invite mentors to help recruit their friends. As it is typically takes more effort to find qualified mentors than interested mentees, this will also allow the ministry to be more prepared and to have mentors who are ready serve, as opposed to the current system in which it sometimes it takes several weeks to find a mentor for an applicant.

Second, a new strategy to limit new registrations to one time each year, and to connect this season of registration with the annual mentoring event is that it will create a greater sense of urgency for those who have thought about considering a mentoring

relationship in the past. When someone knows that there is only one time during the year that it is a possibility to apply to the ministry, this will likely help them to act on the desire, knowing that the opportunity will not come again for another year. This has been proven to be the case in other ministries in the church such as community groups, which are offered bi-annually.

A third suggestion to improve the ministry, and ultimately to help it to grow, is to limit the mentoring relationship to a one year time frame. This recommendation takes into account the suggestion for improvement from the survey results and also the original vision of Women Mentoring Women when it began in 2009. Although the original guidelines state that the mentoring relationship should continue for one year, the ministry has not done anything to enforce this recommendation. As a result, many pairs have continued together for several years.

Even though many of the long-term relationships have been valuable to those who have experienced them, shorter-term relationships would be advantageous to the ministry for several reasons. A short-term, structured format may provide a greater sense of importance to the ministry and help prevent some other problems that the survey discovered, including inconsistency in meeting, and mentors who failed to respond.¹ It may also create a greater sense of significance for the time spent together and cause people to prioritize the meetings and become intentional in how they spend that time. For others who are questioning whether they will become involved in the ministry, a short-

¹ One-third of those who responded to the survey said that they met with their mentor on a quarterly basis.

term commitment might also be more appealing and actually contribute to the growth of the ministry, knowing that the commitment has an ending point.

A final advantage to shortening the mentoring program to one year is that it provides a model that can respond to anticipated growth as the ministry experiences an influx of new mentees each year. If the ministry moves to a model where new applications are submitted on an annual basis, and the program coincides with the same timeline of a one-year commitment for mentoring pairs, as each mentee graduates from the program, her mentor would then become available to come alongside a new applicant. Furthermore, it is the hope that eventually these graduates from the program, who have been blessed by this experience, may also decide to become mentors by coming alongside another younger woman in the program. The suggestion of a one year time commitment for mentoring pairs therefore enables the ministry to expand its pool of qualified mentors.

Another change that might improve the overall structure of the ministry is to create a new timeline of when to offer the three annual events. As previously addressed, adding in a training for mentors is another way to improve the ministry, by ensuring that the mentors are prepared and equipped for the delicate task of spiritual mentoring. However, the timing of when to offer this training should also be strategic. In moving to a ministry model where the promotional event is in early spring, the ministry should add in the annual training for mentors a few weeks prior to the promotional event. This way, mentors would have an opportunity to be trained before they begin the mentoring relationships. At the training, seasoned mentors should also be invited to offer their words of wisdom to those who are just getting started. In addition, inviting a professional

coach, counselor, pastor or spiritual director to come speak at the training, will help the mentors feel equipped for the task ahead. Now that the ministry has been in effect for several years, members of the leadership team should also take time to compile some additional guidelines, helpful tips for mentors, or frequently asked questions into a handbook, to prepare her for typical situations or challenges that may arise.

Another logistical change that would follow would be to move the timing of the spring social event to early fall, as to give the new mentoring pairs at least six months of meeting together before they are invited to a meeting that is intended to equip them with additional resources. This would also allow for the ministry to space out its events a bit more over the course of the year. With these changes, Women Mentoring Women would reinstate its original model of hosting three annual events, each with a distinct purpose at various times throughout the year, and hopefully experience the same sense of growth and momentum when it followed this pattern.

Another proposal for expansion and improvement of the ministry is to add *Storyline* mentoring groups as a regular feature of the mentoring ministry. After getting feedback from three young adult mentoring groups who tested this curriculum, the consensus from all three groups was that it is a very beneficial experience. Not only does it achieve the objective of Women Mentoring Women to emphasize identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living, but the overall feedback from the groups was that the most beneficial part of *Storyline* is the opportunity to share life stories with one another. One mentee shared that part of what drew her to join the *Storyline* group mentoring experience is that she had a desire to make more social connections at the

church. Sharing stories in the context of a small group creates a sense of connection, accountability and closeness with an intimate group, which is a draw for people who are looking for a deeper sense of community, in addition to spiritual guidance.

Furthermore, mentoring groups may become a more sustainable model long-term than one-to-one relationships. Although much of this paper has addressed the benefits of individual soul care, as opposed to group care, the question remains to be answered, once it receives more visibility through a strategic promotional plan, if a one-to-one mentoring ministry can thrive in a large church like Peachtree Presbyterian Church. Furthermore, as the ministry seeks to minister to Millennials, young adults who are longing for social connections as well as spiritual guidance might be drawn to a model where they can receive both in the same offering. A group mentoring option might also allow for cooperative efforts with the church's community groups ministry, where they also are regularly recruiting new group leaders. Perhaps in smaller groups of three or four mentees with one mentor, it will be possible to maintain both a personalized approach that truly addresses the needs of individuals, while also creating a system that is more sustainable.

Another reason to add the *Storyline* mentoring groups to Women Mentoring Women's regular offerings is that sharing one's story and living a good story are very compelling narratives to draw people in who are longing for a deeper sense of connection and meaning in their lives. Since the *Storyline* resource has already been tested by several groups at Peachtree, this group of people could also share about their experiences

at the mentoring launch event, which could help to stimulate interest in the group experience.

Another benefit of mentoring groups is that those who might be hesitant to begin a one-to-one relationship with someone they do not know, might find a group offering a little less threatening, following the idea that people often feel “safety in numbers.” Furthermore, offering a mentoring group for young adults where they can experience the security of an environment with fellow peers, alongside the direction of a wise mentor, who guides them through a curriculum that enables them to live better stories with their lives, could help Women Mentoring Women become a compelling, growing and vibrant ministry at Peachtree. But most importantly, this curriculum uniquely and holistically addresses the purpose of this mentoring strategy, to encourage young adults in identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living. Pairing a sustainable strategy of small mentoring groups, along with this powerful curriculum, could be just the recipe to launch the ministry into its next season of growth.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The intent of this paper is to describe the landscape of young adulthood and to demonstrate why mentoring relationships are beneficial in this season of meaning-making and self-discovery. Furthermore, young adulthood is a pivotal season of life, filled with opportunities to make important decisions, for which young people need guidance. The Church today is posed with the challenge of addressing the needs of Millennials, many of whom are walking away from the church, and one way to demonstrate its commitment to the next generation is to invest in them relationally. This paper seeks to create a spiritual mentoring program in which seasoned Christ-followers are paired with young adults in order to develop an intergenerational discipleship plan that will help young adults develop in identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living.

From its genesis, the founders of Peachtree Presbyterian Church demonstrated a commitment to disciple the next generation, and this core commitment continues to be a part of the vision of the church today. A distinctive of the Peachtree community is that it is made up of many generations and has two unique worshipping venues. Although, the church currently struggles to find ways to connect the older and younger generations in relationship with one another. This paper proposes a strategy that will prepare the older generation to serve as mentors, and provide a safe space for young adults to enter into intentional relationships where they can open up with their struggles and be encouraged to grow in their faith.

Theologically, this strategy is grounded in Jesus' model of discipleship, in which he encouraged his followers to imitate his way of life and then to continue making

disciples. The Apostle Paul modeled a mentoring ministry in the way that he planted churches and then invested in people relationally, encouraging them to imitate his way of life by building into the lives of others. Finally, this mentoring ministry is rooted in the idea that the life of faith is a journey of transformation, in which people are continuing to make progress to become more like Christ and to live out their faith in the world around them. In this process of transformation, spiritual guides help people navigate the journey.

This paper proposes a mentoring ministry that draws from various traditions of guidance. It looks to spiritual direction to encourage people to pay attention to the presence of God in their lives, noting that more important than moving through a particular curriculum, is that the mentor seeks to help people live in awareness of God's presence. Mentoring relationships may learn from the Celtic soul friend and spiritual friendship of Aelred of Rievaulx, more mutual forms of spiritual guidance, which might be more readily received by a generation of young people who would be turned off by mentors who are too directive or authoritative. Finally, this new ministry seeks to take a coaching approach to mentoring, in which mentors learn to ask powerful questions to help young adults to set goals and make progress in their spiritual lives.

While various resources may be used to facilitate the time spent together, one resource that is particularly well-suited for achieving the goals of identity formation, spiritual growth and missional living is *Storyline* by Donald Miller. This life planning tool is effective in providing a natural way to share life stories with one another, uncover one's unique passions and gifts, and ultimately take active steps to move forward to live out one's faith in the world. Following this curriculum, a mentor may serve as a coach,

asking probing questions to follow-up with and encourage the mentee in this process of self-discovery and goal setting.

Implementing a mentoring ministry in a large church like Peachtree Presbyterian Church, it is important that the program has a strong leadership team, who is able to implement a plan that will allow for on-going recruitment, training, pairing and follow-up with mentoring pairs. This ministry will be structured around key events, each with a clear purpose, to ensure that it is sustainable long-term. With a leadership team to monitor the health of the ministry, and annual events to continue to replicate the process of pairing people together, Women Mentoring Women will develop a model to facilitate the connection of intergenerational mentoring relationships.

With a clear purpose and structure in place, the ministry needs to keep its focus on the needs of the next generation, which will continue to change with time. Although mentoring is certainly not a new strategy for spiritual formation, it might need a “facelift,” or to be packaged in a way that a new generation will be drawn towards it. This paper relies on Stanley and Clinton’s emphasis on the importance of centering the mentoring relationship on the needs, goals and desires of the mentee.¹ Egeler says that young people have a longing for adult relationships, but these relationships must be built upon a foundation of connection and mutual rapport.² A greater sense of mutuality in these relationships will likely appeal to a younger generation. A sense of hierarchy, where the mentor takes on the role of teacher or guide in an authoritative sense, and tells

¹ Paul D. Stanley and Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 165-166.

² Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 75-77.

the younger person what to do, will simply not work with this generation. Emerging adults are more drawn to guidance that is dialogical and mutual as opposed to unidirectional.³

Mentors must keep in mind that younger people may be more drawn to intergenerational friendships than intergenerational mentoring relationships. Moving forward, this ministry might need to give further thought to discover if there is another term other than “mentoring” that might convey more mutuality in the relationship. This is not to say that mentoring will not take place, but mentoring will happen more subtly, in the context of a growing, organic relationship. More than seeking advice, younger people are looking for a place of belonging and acceptance. A way that mentors may cultivate a friendship with Millennials is by making them feel important and expressing positive feelings about them.⁴ Since Millennials are not necessarily seeking to be developed, instructed or told what to do, the notion of an intergenerational friendship might be more appealing to them. However, they may also be more open to input in the context of a growing relationship. Once they are “won over” and know that a person is “for them,” they will be open to learn from them and perhaps even to emulate some of the characteristics they see in their mentor.

Younger people value authenticity in their relationships. Another way to begin to build rapport in intergenerational relationships is for the older person to learn to open up and share her life with the younger person. This might be a challenge for a mentor who is more accustomed to being private about her personal life. A mentor who is willing to

³ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation*, 206

⁴ Egeler, *Mentoring Millennials*, 77.

appropriately share some of her past and current struggles will win the right to be heard by the younger person and will create a safe place for sharing. Sociologist Brene Brown writes, “Vulnerability begets vulnerability; courage is contagious.”⁵ She cites Peter Fuda and Richard Badham’s *Harvard Business Review* article which demonstrates the power of vulnerability in leadership.⁶ Leaders who are vulnerable with their subordinates often inspire a snowball effect; their act of vulnerability, is interpreted as an act of courage, which often inspires others to be vulnerable as well.⁷ Brown’s insight might also be relevant for mentoring relationships, which could also be strengthened by a mentor’s commitment to model vulnerability.

Reverse mentoring is a new trend in the workplace that is showing to be effective in creating unity between generations at work.⁸ Drawing on the strengths of younger employees, who are natives to the digital landscape, they are being asked to train older members of the workforce in social media and other uses of technology. This trend is reinforcing the idea of mutuality in mentoring relationships by turning the table on a traditional mentoring model where the more senior employees trained the younger. Furthermore, in these “reverse mentoring” pairs, the more senior employee also has the opportunity to share with the younger co-worker some ways to help him develop. While

⁵ Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead* (New York: Gotham Books, 2012), 54.

⁶ Peter Fuda and Richard Badham, “Fire, Snowball, Mask, Movie: How Leaders Spark and Sustain Change,” *Harvard Business Review*, November 2011. <https://hbr.org/2011/11/fire-snowball-mask-movie-how-leaders-spark-and-sustain-change/ar/1>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ C.S. Kulesza and Daniel Smith, “Reverse Mentoring—Something for Everyone!” *Strategic Finance* 94:10 (2013): 21-23, 63.

“reverse mentoring” is not necessarily the suggested model for faith mentoring in the church, it does suggest the positive outcomes that are possible with a greater sense of mutuality in the mentoring process, and it certainly suggests a model that will be more attractive to young adults. In faith development, mentors may need to begin to consider what they also can learn from their mentees.

In mentoring today’s Millennials, it may be as important to come to the mentoring relationship with a receptive attitude as a giving one. Stanley and Clinton’s insight that the mentoring relationship needs to be centered on the needs, desires and goals of the mentee is instructive: today’s Millennials need to know that they have a voice and want to make a contribution to the relationship. Part of meeting them where they are is to also be open to learning things from them. More egalitarian, spiritual friendships between the generations, could be one way to bridge the generational divide and bring about intergenerational unity within the Peachtree community. Stanley and Clinton highlight the mutual blessing that comes with mentoring relationships as mentees often challenge their mentors’ thinking and inspire their ideals.⁹ Perhaps renewal in the church will happen as much from the inspiration of the younger adults as it will from the older generations sharing their wisdom and experience with the younger.

⁹ Stanley and Clinton, *Connecting*, 165.

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