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A Strategy for Equipping Pastoral Leaders of Nepali Reformed Churches

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Doctoral Project Approval Sheet

This doctoral project entitled

A STRATEGY FOR EQUIPPING PASTORAL LEADERS OF NEPALI REFORMED
CHURCHES

Written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary
upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:


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Date Received: April 30, 2020

A STRATEGY FOR EQUIPPING PASTORAL LEADERS OF NEPALI REFORMED
CHURCHES

A DOCTORAL PROJECT
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

ARBIND POKHAREL
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ABSTRACT

A Strategy for Equipping Pastoral Leaders of Nepali Reformed Churches

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Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2020

The purpose of this paper is to develop an appropriate curriculum for pastoral formation for Nepali churches. Through the study of Sixty-seven years of historical development, and practices currently available for training pastors, a new strategy is being prepared to equip the pastoral leaders of Nepali Reformed Churches (NRC). Pastors will learn to adopt healthy and excellent ministry practices by learning and mentoring towards formation.

The paper argues that pastors, since the beginning of the church in Nepal, have practiced leadership heavily influenced by the culture, politics, and religion around them. This has led to faulty ecclesiology, apparent in the churches. Church leaders need to reframe contextual frameworks for spirituality and leadership, shifting from traditional models of person and power-based to a more biblical model of shepherding that enables others. Intentional learning, practicing, and mentoring must become the backbone of pastoral training.

The first part of the paper presents the historical church and the context of leadership development, as well as the ministry challenges of the NRC churches. The second part presents theological reflections by way of relevant literature reviews and biblical studies on the topics addressed. The third part of the paper presents the methodology of new ministry initiatives, including a sample manual on Mentoring for Pastoral Formation. To test these principles, the project ran two sets of training with pastors and church planters, and a group of seminary faculty in Nepal.

Through an examination of Scripture and relevant resources, the project concludes that Jesus's model of shepherding leadership seeks to serve the community in practice. The project unearths the principle that transformational leadership formation is best achieved through mentoring.

Content Reader: Tom Schwanda, PhD.

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The list is too long to fit here, so let me name the front row.

First, Thank you, Bim, Alu and Imu for the blessing of your presence and unceasing love.

Thank you, Cross-Way Church, Kathmandu, for your patience and grace in allowing me the time and space to engage in this project. Thank you, NRC churches and RPS seminary for letting me expand my vision and test it out on you.

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PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

This doctoral project is about pastoral leadership formation in Nepal. Since the beginning of the church in Nepal, pastors have assumed unique patterns of leadership that bear character traits borrowed from culture, politics, and religion.¹ In the past sixty-seven years of church in Nepal, the majority of leaders have not had formal training in pastoring or leadership.² Some had short-term training in the Bible and theology and a select few had formal seminary training, yet each one had a felt-calling to lead a church in some capacity. Because of this lack of training, pastoral leaders in Nepali churches today have adopted a form of ecclesiology that has led to misconceptions about spiritual leadership. The purpose of this project is to develop training curriculum so that pastoral leaders of Nepali Reformed Churches (NRC) learn healthy leadership patterns and excellent ministry practices through mentoring in spiritual leadership.³ NRC will be the primary beneficiaries of this project, as many young pastors and leaders are either planting churches or leading young churches. The ultimate goal is to prepare training manuals for use within the NRC, however, the scope of this paper also extends to Bible colleges where future pastors are being trained.

¹ Leadership in cultural context is one overarching theme of Dr. Rajendra Rongong's book. See Rajendra K. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal: An Indigenous Movement Till 1990* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books, Nepal, 2012), 11-12.

² Nepal is a sub-literate nation. Most of the first and second-generation Christian leaders did not have formal education in pastoring as there were no such trainings available. See Mangalman Maharjan, *A Study on Equipping Laity for Church Growth* (Delhi: ISPCK, GFA Publications, 2002), 1.

³ Nepali Reformed Church (NRC) is a church movement that started in 2005 with Cross-Way Church in Kathmandu as the first and visionary leader of the movement.

In part one, I have sketched out leadership patterns in the historical landscape of missionary endeavors in Nepal, as well as analyzed leadership practices since the conception of the Nepali church in the early 1950s. I have presented a general pattern by which pastors are formed for their vocation and how they are practicing leadership. In part two, I have reviewed relevant literature on the history of leadership in Nepali churches, spiritual disciplines, mentoring, and adaptive leadership. In part three, I have presented a plan for the new mentoring ministry initiatives, along with a sample manual that will be used for training pastors for Nepali churches. These topics frame the content of this paper.

A Background to the Ministry Context

We are a missionary family in Nepal. Although both my wife and I are natives of Nepal, both of us studied abroad for almost a decade where we acquired a vision for the church and the mission work.⁴ As young and theologically educated leaders, we jumped into ministry early in life and eventually learned the course of leadership while practicing it. In this journey of fifteen years, we have set up several outposts of ministry and so find ourselves at the helm of these organizations.⁵ In one sense, these ministries are flourishing. But in another sense, they have generated challenges that are beyond our resources and skill sets.

⁴ I attended High School in Mansfield, Ohio, then college at Dordt College in Iowa, and Kuyper College in Michigan. I then completed my Masters in Theological Studies at Calvin Theological Seminary. My wife studied at Calvin College and Calvin Seminary.

I am a founding pastor of Cross-Way Church in Kathmandu, Nepal. Cross-Way was planted in 2005, a year after our return home from abroad. In 2008, the church's vision was formulated: "Cross-Way is a well of grace from where we'll draw and serve, so that Christ-centered churches will be planted in the seventy-five districts of Nepal."⁶ Over time, this vision has taken the shape of a church planting movement called Nepali Reformed Church (NRC). After fourteen years into this mission, having seen over thirty churches planted, I find myself in a position of needing to rethink church leadership. Cross-Way, as a mother church leading the vision,⁷ is invested in developing pastor-leaders and gathering resources to assist in the mission. As a senior pastor, I am reimagining, in part through this paper, the process by which pastors are formed; not only for Nepali Reformed Churches, but also in general for the Nepali church.

Given our training in excellent schools in the USA,⁸ and the nature of our mission work, particularly in the areas of church planting, we felt the moral responsibility to train and equip leaders right from the start. So, in 2004, I began investing in a small theological training school, now called Reformed and Presbyterian Seminary (RPS),

⁵ I serve as senior pastor of Cross-Way Church and the Nepali Reformed Church movement, as well as the President of Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary. My wife serves as founder and CEO of Higher Ground, Nepal, an NGO and small businesses for development of women and children at high risk of exploitation.

⁶ Through a series of leadership retreats and discussions over five years, this vision was formulated in November, 2008. At the time Cross-Way Church had planted two churches across two districts, but this has now become the vision of Nepali Reformed Church (NRC). Details are found in <https://xwaynepal.com/>.

⁷ The term "mother church" is commonly used in Nepal to refer to a church that gives birth and nurtures a new church.

⁸ See footnote 4.

where I continue to teach and serve as president of the board.⁹ The seminary has now become an accredited and recognizable institution offering Bachelors in Theology, as well as Masters of Divinity degree programs. The urge behind all these ministries is to holistically prepare pastoral leaders through theological education as well as skill and character formation. One of the motivations behind this project is to construct a curriculum for pastoral formation in context.

Ministry Challenges

The Nepali church is known for its exponential growth through rigorous evangelism and its resiliency to the many hardships posed by the mountainous landscape, poverty, and persecution.¹⁰ The growth of the church amidst these challenges is a wonder in the study of world mission history. The rapid growth is generally attributed to two factors: missionary zeal for spreading the gospel evident in the many forms of evangelism, and the work of the Holy Spirit through expressions of charismatic gifts, particularly of healing.¹¹ While the church has grown exponentially, the proportionate

⁹ Reformed and Presbyterian Seminary was established in 2000 by one Korean missionary pastor working in partnership with a few Presbyterian pastors in Nepal. RPS, then called Evangelical Presbyterian Theological Seminary) is now an accredited theological seminary (by Asia Theological Association) in Nepal with a stated vision: “We see Nepali communities flourishing with the fruit of the gospel through the labors of disciples yoked with Christ.” RPS offers Bachelors in Theology (B.Th.) and Masters in Divinity (MDiv) degree programs geared towards preparing pastors and leaders for Nepali churches. In nineteen years, it has graduated over 150 students, currently serving churches across the country. Details of the seminary can be found at <http://www.rpsnepal.com/>.

¹⁰ The Nepali church is one of the fastest growing churches in the world, according to many national and international sources. See Danielle Preiss, “Why Nepal has One of the World’s Fastest-Growing Christian Populations,” *npr.org*, posted on February 3, 2016, Accessed January 5, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/02/03/463965924/why-nepal-has-one-of-the-worlds-fastest-growing-christian-populations>.

¹¹ Dr. Rajendra K. Rongong makes this claim in his study of sixteen of the early churches in Nepal until 1990. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 101.

development of leaders has been inadequate.¹² This has been a detriment to many young churches.¹³ The leaders, although gifted in evangelism and charismatic gifts, have often devalued the need for critical theological education and spiritual disciplines; and consequently, settled into patterns of leadership framed by the culture. In the wake of widespread church growth, these shallow roots have hindered healthy development. A lack of adequate mentorship in pastoral formation is partly to be blamed for the stagnation of the young Nepali churches.

In general, leadership in Nepal tends to be more power-based as wealth, education, and authority are seen as indispensable characteristics of a leader. Churches are often organized according to these traditional power dynamics as well. In the majority-oral tradition communities, cunning or outspoken individuals seize leadership positions, while other qualified, but less authoritarian members of the community are excluded. People with wider networks and influence consume power. As a result, church leaders have been vulnerable to falling into overbearing patterns of leadership learned from the culture.

Furthermore, leadership in Nepal is top down;¹⁴ and leadership positions are thick with implications of entitlement. The traditional model of guru-apprenticeship dominates the culture of leadership, where absolute loyalty to the guru is a prerequisite to acceptance into training. At first sight, it appears like mentoring for leadership, but proper

¹² Ibid., 102.

¹³ NRC church network in past two years has three churches at the verge of closing down because there is no leader to pastor these churches. This is a common experience in many denominations in Nepal.

¹⁴ This is visible in the South Asian Hindu culture of Guru-apprentice, as well as local and political hierarchical systems of society.

training with measured accountability is not the priority of the guru or apprentice. In fact, such an avenue into leadership has destructive possibilities, because loyalty without discernment can be toxic. Without accountability, leaders can easily fall into self-serving and deceptive patterns. This type of unquestioning submission continues to be a sure means to gain authority and rise to power, even inside the church. These values of the wider culture will continue to impact leadership unless churches and related institutions take responsibility to format new systems and processes by which pastors are prepared for vocational ministry.

On top of an already sub-literate context of Nepal, pastoral leaders have been deprived of theological scholarship, more specifically, of healthy ecclesiology.¹⁵ Because of undervalued analytical learning, cultural ways have dug deeper roots. Therefore, the leaders under training must be mentored in Biblical leadership so that they will not be lured into deceptive cultural models. The churches and leaders must adopt new practices to cultivate Christ-likeness in leadership. In addition to theological education, commitment to mentored ways of spiritual leadership will be the key to healthier churches; where leadership will shift from a power and influence base to a more enabling model. This paper presents a case for a new model of training pastoral leaders in Nepal.

¹⁵ In view of the lack of publications or analytical studies on Christian theology and ecclesiology in Nepal; and, having led Nepali churches and taught in a theological institution for over seventeen years, this has become evident.

CHAPTER 1

NATIONAL CHURCH AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

Chapter one explores the historical landscape of Nepali churches with regard to pastors' function as leaders in their churches and communities at large. The church in Nepal is young, tracing its history back to 1953. The historical developments and cultural context that has led to the making of pastoral leaders needs to be reexamined by the twenty-first-century Nepali church. This part of the paper explores historical and cultural influences and provides evaluative remarks on how these factors have contributed to the formation of pastoral leaders in Nepal.

Nepal is known for its exotic landscapes and fast-growing churches. It is primarily known for its high Himalayas and its resilient and friendly people.¹ Until the new constitution of 2016, Nepal remained a Hindu state. Hinduism as a *sanatan dharma* (literally, “traditional religion”),² makes theological claims about the origins of the

¹ Nepal is the land of the Himalayas; and the friendliness of the people is witnessed by many expatriates residing here. See for example, United Mission to Nepal, "Executive Director Requirement 2015," *umn.org.np.*, copyright 2015, accessed April 13, 2020, https://www.umn.org.np/ed_docs/EDRP2015.pdf.

universe. As a “well-formed religion”³, Hinduism is not only comprehensive in format, but also lays pervasive claims on every area of life in creation. In this soil, churches, claiming less than seventy years of existence, are rising to challenge the ancient foundations. This will inevitably invite cultural inquisition beyond what the young churches can adequately address.

Historical Events Prepared the Ground for the Church

Nepal was a closed country until 1951.⁴ The kings and royal dynasty ruled over Nepal for many centuries. In 1846, Junga Bahadur Rana, a leader of the military forces, organized a military coup, wiped out everyone in the ministerial cabinet, and literally, overnight declared himself the prime minister and commander-in-chief. This began a century-long rule of power through his blood line, locking out all foreign power and influence. The Rana dynasty ruled Nepal for 104 years, all the while keeping the ceremonial monarchy. Foreigners were not allowed into Nepal unless it was diplomatic permission granted only for specific visits. This was a way to protect Nepal from the colonial powers advancing into India at the time. But it also served to keep Rana

² *Sanatan dharma* is a commonly used Sanskrit phrase meaning eternal religion, which Hinduism claims to be. See Mangalman Maharjan, *Comparative Study of Hinduism and Christianity in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books, 2002), 17.

³ “Well Formed” religions, according to John Cooper, are religions that hold theological claims about every aspect of life, its origins, and the future of existence. Only a few religions are well formed by nature, such as Hinduism and Christianity. See John Cooper, “Philosophy of Religion,” (course syllabus, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI 2001).

⁴ The information about the history of Nepal is taken from four sources: Jonathan Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel of God* (Kathmandu: Pilgrims Book House, 1997), 117-132; Cindy Perry, *A Biographical History of the Church in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Nepal History Project, 1990), 83-85; Rajendra K. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal Till 1990: An Indigenous Christian Movement* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books Publications, 2012), 20-59; and Norma Kehrberg, *The Cross in the Land of the Khukuri* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books, 2000), 39-62.

sovereignty unchallenged. The general public were not allowed access to education or given permission to leave the country to explore. Jonathan Lindell, a first-generation Christian missionary in Nepal writing on the Rana regime says, “the restrictions on almost any kind of human enterprise were getting far too tight; chafing and turning into sores. The curfew was one of the devices, among several, used to discourage plots and subversive activities against the government.”⁵ This 104-year period of history is known as the “Dark Age”,⁶ as Nepal was closed off from industrial development and the global economy.

Going further back into the history of Christianity in Nepal, it began with the entry of Capuchin Jesuit fathers in the early eighteenth century, who made their way from Rome and then embarked from India to head overland through the Nepal valley on their way to Tibet.⁷ Because of the harsh winter over the Himalayas, they lodged in Kathmandu valley for the season. According to Lindell, twenty-nine Capuchin missionaries from the Jesuit Society of Italy ended up staying for over fifty-four years, from 1715-1769; six of them died while in Nepal.⁸ They were from the Franciscan order of the Catholic Church, and were committed to a life of austerity, poverty, and simplicity.

⁵ Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel*, 117.

⁶ The “Dark Age” is general terminology used in Nepal for the 104-year Rana Regime between 1846-1950. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 41-42.

⁷ Jonathan Lindell briefly accounts the entry and work of Capuchin Jesuit Fathers who made the most arduous travels over 38 years in attempts to establish missions in Tibet. Along the way, some fathers were granted permission to remain in the Kathmandu valley for winter of the Himalayas, where they carried out the works of education, language, and general science. In repayment they were granted permission to teach and practice Christianity. This liberty lasted from 1715-1769. See Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel*, 17-27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Their work in Kathmandu valley included learning language, producing literature, preaching, teaching, conducting religious services, caring for converts, and practicing medicine.⁹

In 1769, while colonial empires advanced in South Asia, Nepal felt the pressure to become a united force.¹⁰ Due to fear of Western powers and spies, King Prithivi Narayan Shah, the sovereign who unified Nepal, decreed the expulsion of all foreigners and banned all their activities in Nepal. This forced the Jesuit missionaries to depart in 1769.¹¹ Along with them, approximately eighty church members who had been baptized over the years were also escorted out of the country into India.¹² For the next two centuries, Christianity could not penetrate into Nepal. However, the silent years gave birth to a vibrant missionary movement that would grow along Nepal's borders with India, preparing and praying right up until 1950, when Nepal would open again for missionary activities.¹³

The First Protestant Mission in Nepal

In the winter of 1949-50, a group of missionaries from North India, working at a mission school in Mossouri, received special permission from the government to enter

⁹ Lindell notes some details of their work in relation to the demands and sanctions the kings provided for their permission to remain in the valley. Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel*, 20-27.

¹⁰ Ibid., 17-27.

¹¹ Ibid., 17.

¹² Ibid., 27.

¹³ Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 41-48.

Nepal.¹⁴ Although Nepal was still a closed country, they were allowed in for the purpose of a bird watching expedition. Bob Fleming and his team, including his wife - who was a nurse, entered Nepal.¹⁵ The visit was used for the higher purpose of exploring in-roads for medical missions' work. The experience led them to explore more open doors for mission work. After the 1950-51 revolution, Nepal became democratic and open to foreigners. In 1952, the missionaries made requests from the government of Nepal to establish mission hospitals in Tansen in the mid-west and in Kathmandu. In response to the request came a letter, famously known as "the Dikshit Letter," granting permission with strict conditions.¹⁶ The letter stated, "The staff of the centers and for the hospital should be drawn from Nepalese citizens. The hospital at Tansen and the welfare centers in Kathmandu should be handed over to the Government of Nepal after five years. And distribution of medicine and treatment of all patients should be free."¹⁷

Upon receiving this letter of permission, an ad hoc committee was formed, which discussed one of the key principles that has influenced mission and church leadership in Nepal. The report of that first meeting was summarized by Lindell in these words:

It was felt that the mistakes that had come to light in the missionary movement in India and other countries, resulting from competition, possessiveness and independent action by denominational and separate organizations should not be repeated in Nepal. Opinion pressed for exploring the possibility of establishing a Christian mission in Nepal on the widest possible cooperative basis, a combined interdenominational and international approach.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 41-58.

¹⁵ Ibid., 51.

¹⁶ Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel*, 142.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 144.

Individuals from medical and other mission organizations from all across India, as well as missionaries from one dozen international organizations came together as charter members to form United Mission to Nepal (UMN).¹⁹ This was in effort to not place self or particular church organizations above the work that God had called them to do.

The executive director of UMN in 1997 said, “One of the aims of UMN from the beginning was to train Nepalis in professional and technical leadership. As this happened, more Nepalis naturally assumed leadership positions.”²⁰ Due to their efforts in social work, and provision of professionals in hospitals, schools and industries, the gospel has infiltrated every part of life in Nepal. Mission organizations, keeping in line with their values of raising Nepali leaders, continued on in the pattern initially set by UMN.

Another director, Edgar Metzler explained that within UMN, there was an “increasing desire to more fully place all programs of UMN under Nepali leadership.”²¹ Now the Mission’s energy concentrates almost exclusively on increasing the capacity of Nepali people and organizations to meet the needs of the nation. Enabling leaders by coaching and mentoring the nationals was the example set by pioneer missionaries since the beginning. These early leaders sought to serve others and exalt Christ over any particular institution. This model of servant leadership was an invaluable contribution to the early church in Nepal.

¹⁹ United Mission to Nepal, one of the largest early mission organizations in Nepal, was started in 1954. Their vision according to Edgar Metzler, was “to serve the people of Nepal in the name and spirit of Christ.” See Lindell, *Nepal and the Gospel of God*, ii.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Norma Kherberg, “Footprints in Nepal,” in *Fifty Years in God’s Hand 1954-2004* (Kathmandu: United Mission to Nepal, 2003), 79.

The Persecution Era (1950-1990)

Ever since the expulsion of the Capuchin Fathers in 1769, Nepal has maintained an uncomfortable relationship of suspicion and distrust with Christianity. From its early presence in Nepal, says Perry, Christianity was perceived as the religion that came with foreign faces from the West and tagged with connotations of colonialism and imperialism.²² King Prithvi Narayan Shah, as the father of the nation, not only maintained an “excessive anti-foreign posture”, but also retained the Hindu core principles and structure of the society.²³ According to Perry, Hindu religious convictions ran through the heart of the Nepali society, pulling it together in unity. The rulers perceived that Christianity would threaten that unity.²⁴ For the new nation to survive, notes Perry, “The Hindu kingdom, where everything belongs to the realm of the gods, must be kept undefiled, and the Hindu structure of society kept intact. The Brahmins rose up in resistance from the time the first Christians came to Nepal.”²⁵

This distrust continued underground through the Rana regime, but resurfaced with democratic monarchy in 1951. One factor that contributed to this skepticism was the point that initial converts were often victims of fatal diseases like leprosy or other illnesses that ostracized them from their family and society. Christianity, at times, only seemed to heighten the tension between these marginalized individuals and the society at

²² Cindy Perry, *A Biographical History of the Church in Nepal*, 3rd ed. (Kathmandu: Nepali Church History Project. 2000), 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

large. Ever since the start of the first church in 1953 up until the 1990s, in view of the national laws, stories of persecution have been found throughout Nepal. Wherever there was a church, there were testimonies of persecution. Pastor Lok B. Tamang, who served during this era, shared about a dozen times he was taken by the police into custody, tortured and threatened with death. But each time, God spared his life.²⁶ He claimed that, by 2004, there were over eighty-five churches planted through his ministries in the southern district of Nawalparasi.²⁷ Persecution has been an integral part of the church in Nepal and continues to be so, even after four generations. In spite of this, churches continue to grow and flourish.

Early Momentum in Pastoral Leadership

The first wave of pastoral leaders came to Nepal from India. Missions in Nepal was born out of the womb of India, as the majority of missionaries to south Asia worked there.²⁸ Missionaries from India were the first to come into Nepal as fruit of a century of prayer. Nepali Christian literature was developed in the Nepali speaking regions of Darjeeling in India. The Bible was translated into Nepali in West Bengal, India.²⁹ The first evangelists entering Nepal were trained at Nepali Bible training centers like the one

²⁶ Pastor Lok B. Tamang shared his experience of persecution with this writer in 2004. A more complete biography of Pastor B. Tamang is found in Bob Jackson's book. Bob Jackson, *Higher than the Hills, Stories of Pastor Lok Bahadur Tamang* (Nepal: Highland Books, 1998).

²⁷ Pastor Lok B. Tamang, interview by Rev. Arbind Pokharel (writer of this doctoral project), Rajahar, Nawalparasi, August, 2004..

²⁸ This is clear in Lindell's chapter 7, "Riding the Tide into Nepal." See Lindell, *The Gospel of God*, 151.

²⁹ Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 35.

in Mirik, near the Nepal border.³⁰ The missionaries envisioned the future church in Nepal and began preparing leaders. According to Rongong, the first missionaries who entered Nepal collectively upheld that as they worked with their expertise in the fields of training and development; they would assist the Nepali leaders in leading the church, not propagating their denominational outposts.³¹ According to Tom Hale, a prolific writer and career missionary in Nepal, “From the beginning it was intended that the church be independent of the mission, that it be a truly Nepali church with its own leadership... all major decisions would remain in the hands of the Nepali believers.”³² Leading the church in Nepal has rested fully on the shoulders of Nepali leaders since the conception of the church, even though missionaries provided the needed support. While an enabling leadership model was exemplified by the pioneer missionaries and other prominent Christian organizations, these principles have yet to be embraced by the wider Christian community.

Major Turning Points in Church Leadership

The church in Nepal finds its roots in the hearts of missionaries who first lived and served along the bordering areas in India. There were missionary outposts in Darjeeling to the east of Nepal, Raxaul to the south, Nautunwa to the south-central,

³⁰ Darjeeling Hills Bible School was established by World Missions Prayer League in Mirik, West Bengal, India near Nepal border in 1954. See *The Oxford Encyclopedia of South Asia Christianity*, s.v. “Darjeeling Hills Bible School,” *oxfordreference.com*, copyright 2020, accessed January 1, 2020, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198073857.001.0001/acref-9780198073857-e-0312>.

³¹ Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 74.

³² Tom Hale, *Light Dawns in Nepal: The Story of the International Nepal Fellowship* (Kathmandu: Hillside Press, 2012), 59.

Rupaidiah and Nepalgunj to southwest, and Tanakpur, Pithoragarh and Dehradun to the far west of Nepal. Believers in these places prayed for centuries that Nepal would open for mission work. Many Christians from these areas were the first missionaries to enter Nepal. Prior to the country's opening, there was so much intentionality in mission work that the Nepal Border Fellowship (NBF) was started in the 1940s. Perry notes about NBF, "They were an unlikely crew of hardy individuals, predominantly women, of various nationalities and denominations, united together in a common concern for the evangelization of Nepal. The vision was for it to be a fellowship of missionaries, a means of sharing, encouraging one another, and promoting diligent prayer until the land of Nepal was opened to the Gospel."³³ At one point, there were over seventy-five members in NBF from across India sharing information, mobilizing, and starting fellowships. But most importantly they were releasing the power of concentrated prayer. Perry ponders, "Was this perhaps one of the keys to the opening of Nepal within the next twenty years?"³⁴ There is no doubt that the foundation of the Nepali church is saturated with the spiritual power of prayer.

The Start of the First Church in Pokhara

The Nepal Evangelistic Band (NEB) was a new mission society established in India along the south-central border of Nepal. Initially NEB was under the leadership of two women missionaries, who drove the vision to equip individuals who would

³³ Perry, *A Biographical History*, 53.

³⁴ Ibid.

eventually go and evangelize Nepal.³⁵ They prayerfully searched for Nepali men and women who could be trained and taken with them into Nepal. They found David Mukhia, who had served over twenty years in various capacities with Nepal Border Fellowship missionaries. He joined the NEB in 1951 to enter Nepal, and eventually pastored the first church in Nepal.

It was no coincidence that David met Buddhi Sagar and Putali Gautam of Pokhara. Missionaries from NEB who had worked among Nepalis in the border town of Nautunua, North India, had reached out to Buddhi at the most desperate time in his life. Buddhi was from Pokhara, and was believed to be cursed after his first and second wives died of smallpox, along with all their children. Fear of the gods and the spirits of grief pushed him to leave Nepal and settle in India. Yet again, he lost his third wife and three other children to smallpox. Deprived of all hope, he clung to the God of the NEB missionaries. His life slowly improved. He found hope and a growing desire to bring this hope back to his people in Pokhara. He followed the missionaries to Pokhara in 1952. According to Hale, “Buddhi and Putali [his new wife] along with the five Nepali members of the Band formed the initial nucleus of the church.”³⁶ He even gave his own land to build a church. This was the first church in Nepal, in Ramghat, Pokhara.

While stakes were high, and struggles surrounded them in rural Nepal, missionaries had the wisdom to entrust this important task of building the church into the not-so-capable, yet committed hands of the young Nepali leaders. Ultimately, this reveals that these leaders trusted God to oversee the growth and maturity of the church. This

³⁵ Ibid., 71.

³⁶ Hale, *Light Dawns in Nepal*, 59.

legacy of humble leadership, empowering young leaders, is one that the modern Nepali church must learn to imitate if we desire to flourish in the years ahead.

Start of Nepal Christian Fellowship (NCF)

In 1960, the government of Nepal drafted a new constitution amidst the struggles of balancing power between the monarchy and the nine-year-old-democracy. Although the constitution spoke of religious tolerance, the nation was not in a position to apply it.³⁷ While the new churches grew slowly, persecution was rampant and these scattered Christians felt isolated; desperately needing support from the leaders in the capital. There was an imminent need for national Christian fellowship. In January of 1960, thirty leaders of mission organizations and churches met at an “old house of Bhaktapur” just outside Kathmandu to address the emerging problems.³⁸ The outcome of the day was the formation of the seven member Nepal Christian Fellowship (NCF) under the chairmanship of Pastor David Mukhiya from Pokhara.³⁹

In 1962, an anti-conversion law was enacted, primarily intending to curb the growth and spread of Christianity. This flung open the flood gates of persecution across the country. In many places Christians were imprisoned or tortured by community leaders

³⁷ Ibid., 63.

³⁸ National Churches Fellowship of Nepal, “Introduction to NCFN,” *ncfn.org.*, accessed March 23, 2020, <http://www.ncfn.org/introduction.html>.

³⁹ Ibid.

called *Panchayat*.⁴⁰ NCF played a role of leadership in providing fellowship and encouragement, lobbying, encouraging persecuted believers, and assisting church planting efforts. Furthermore, NCF served to unite young and struggling churches and their leaders.⁴¹ The formation and work of NCF was one of the ways God sustained the church through the persecution era. NCF also sought to bring unity in leadership during this era. As Nepali churches have now reached the far corners of the country, unity among leaders, a united front to tackle national laws and policies, continues to be a crucial issue for the leadership of the Nepali church.

“Freedom of Religion” and “the End of Persecution”

Persecution, which had been an inescapable part of the Nepali church since the beginning, continued to increase during the 1980s.⁴² Persecution reached its climax in 1989-1990 when key Christian leaders and many others were sentenced to prison. In 1990, a new revolution broke out nationwide that forced the revision of the constitution.⁴³ A new form of religious freedom was instigated. Article 19 of the revised constitution stated: “Every person has the freedom to appropriate and practice his/her own religion as practiced traditionally, provided that no one shall be allowed to convert another person

⁴⁰ *Panchayat* comes from Nepali word for five. It was a system of governance instigated by King Tribhuvan Shah in 1962, as an effort to manage power through five leaders per each Village Development Committee leaders loyal to him, but was later overhauled in 1990. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 126.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Rongong discusses persecution of Nepali Christians during 1980s and 90s in his book, chapter 8, 10, and 11. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 102-103.

⁴³ Ibid., 126.

from one religion to another.”⁴⁴ Following this pronouncement, dozens of Christians in prison were released. This contributed to a surge in church growth in the 1990s. All the while, the country remained a Hindu state under a constitutional monarchy. Persecution against Christians subsided, but did not stop on a national scale. Although Christians continued to suffer, churches continued to grow in numbers and in strength.⁴⁵ As a result of this persecution, church leaders grew even more resilient.

The Maoist Insurgency and its Impact on Church Leadership

The nation of Nepal was moving ahead in the global arena, but not fast enough. The era between 1996 and 2006 was marked by civil war between the Nepal government under the constitutional monarchy, and the Maoist guerrilla movement.⁴⁶ The “Maoist War” was instigated to challenge the widening gap between the rich power controllers in the capital and the resource-deprived rural villages.⁴⁷ Neither the king nor the political leaders were addressing these pressing issues. The ten-year war brought acute awareness to the range and depth of inequalities and threatened the future of the country. Churches, however, continued to grow and thrive throughout the civil war. Notable community gathering places, like churches, were targeted locations. Many churches gave shelter to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ This is made clear by Rongong in chapter ten, “Reasons that contributed to the growth of the Church.” See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 113-123.

⁴⁶ On February 14, 1996 the Maoist movement in Nepal started with a series of bomb attacks. The civil war continued for ten years. Thorough coverage of the war and its impacts can be found in *Nepali Times*, a weekly publication. See Mohan Mainali, “Making War on the Day of Love,” posted on February 16, 2015, accessed January 31, 2020, <http://archive.nepalitimes.com/blogs/thebrief/2015/02/16/making-war-on-the-day-of-love/>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

the Maoist guerrillas, while other churches suffered if they refused to side with them.⁴⁸ Some were even burned down. Ironically, some of the Maoists cadres and leaders were Christians. A few were notable party leaders and have since become leaders in the national scale.

In 2006, the ten-year Maoist War ended, and soon after Nepal was declared a “secular state,”⁴⁹ doing away with the Hindu kingdom. The new constitution, prepared over the next ten years, finally recognized freedom of religion; granting, at least in letter, the full human right to conviction, belief and practice of the religion of one’s choice.⁵⁰ However, the ambiguous clause “within eternal religion” still remains, alluding to the Hindu religion of the forefathers.⁵¹ Subsequent criminal code to the constitution penalize any acts of religious conversion.⁵² But there are still small, but powerful, forces demanding that Nepal revert back to a Hindu State and expatriate Christians. Persecution is far from over; yet churches thrive in spite of it, if not because of it. In the backdrop of this national milieu and various challenges posed against the church, people are rising to plant and lead new churches.

⁴⁸ Pastor Suklal Tmang, interview by Rev. Arbind Pokharel (writer of this doctoral project), Rajahar, Nawalparasi, November 2015. A pastor friend, Suklal Tamang testified to this writer about being forced to give shelter to the Maoist fighters over many years.

⁴⁹ Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 131.

⁵⁰ See Appendix C for a copy of the New Constitution of 2015’s provision for religious freedom. See Dharmik Chautari Nepal, “Press Release DCN (Religious Forum Nepal),” *nepalchurch.com.*, posted on August 4, 2015, accessed January 31, 2020, <http://nepalchurch.com/9694/press-release-dcn-religious-forum-nepal/>.

⁵¹ See Appendix C, Section 9, Article 158 of the New Constitution 2015-2017.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Formation of Nepali Reformed Church: A New Church Movement

In 2005, one more church was planted in Kathmandu. As a couple, my wife and I had returned to Nepal after a decade studying abroad. For me, the latter two thirds of those years were training in theology and ministry. We spent two more years in North India teaching in a seminary and assisting a Nepali church in Dehradun. Through those twelve years of preparation, a vision had been forged for a church in Kathmandu; a church with spiritual vibrancy and theological balance, a new church that would intellectually integrate the ancient church traditions with Nepali contextual strengths.⁵³ It began with Cross-Way Church in Kathmandu; but soon a new movement, called Nepali Reformed Churches (NRC), would emerge. NRC has a vision to plant churches in every district of Nepal.⁵⁴ In 2008, after four years of discussions, retreats and conferences with leaders and members of the church, the vision was drafted.⁵⁵ It came about through the practice of being a local church in context. Subsequently, the mission and values were drafted in the following years. The mission of Cross-Way church was confirmed: “become disciples of Christ who make disciples.” From the start, Cross-Way Church was committed to look beyond herself to draw and distribute resources by equipping leaders to shepherd churches throughout the country, as well as among the Nepali diaspora. This

⁵³ The wider Nepali church had been birthed and led by leaders of charismatic and Pentecostal movements, if not of fundamental evangelical brand, where theological engagement was lacking.

⁵⁴ Details about the church can be found in the website: See “Story Behind Cross Way!,” *xwaynepal.com*, copyright 2020, accessed January 31, 2020, <https://xwaynepal.com/the-story/>.

⁵⁵ The 2008 drafted vision stated, “Cross-Way is a well of grace from where we’ll draw and serve, so that Christ centered churches will be planted in the 75 districts of Nepal.” See “Our Vision,” *xwaynepal.com*., copyright 2020, accessed January 10, 2020, <http://xwaynepal.com>.

vision required that Cross-Way pastors and leaders be theologically trained and spiritually disciplined in order to plant and lead healthy local churches.

Nepal, in the second decade of the second millennia has one of the fastest growing churches in the world.⁵⁶ The Nepal Christian Society (NCS), a common platform for Christian leaders, claims that there are at least one and a half million Christians in Nepal.⁵⁷ The church is one of the most thriving communities in the country; yet there is a disproportionately small amount of resources and efforts being invested in equipping leaders. In the Nepali Reformed Church alone, there are only seventeen ordained pastors and elders with some theological training, serving over thirty churches.⁵⁸ This shortage of trained leaders in NRC illustrates the dire need for equipping pastoral leaders for the young Nepali churches. In this regard, the church needs to pay serious attention and invest concerted efforts into a thorough study in biblical ecclesiology and mentored ways of developing Christ-like leaders.

⁵⁶ Operation World states growth of churches in Nepal at the rate of 5.3% annually. See Operation World, “Nepal,” *operationworld.org*, copyright 2020, accessed April 5, 2020, <http://www.operationworld.org/country/nepal/owtext.html>.

⁵⁷ While accurate census information is being collected in 2020 by both the government of Nepal and Nepal Christian Society, the available statistics lack credibility about the Christian population (ranging from 0.4% to 5%). Most of the Nepali Christian leaders estimate 1.5 million Christians as a conservative number.

⁵⁸ Statistics on national church leaders are not available, but generally understood, this information above is the average scenario on a national scale.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pastoral work in Nepal has grown out of organic practices in the soil of Nepal's predominantly Hindu culture. Here, leadership is defined by cultural aptitudes that are not always based on biblical paradigms. Leadership as seen in Scripture requires one to have an understanding of the context. A Christian definition of leadership also necessitates knowing people through relationships, understanding how people change, and a vision of servant leadership motivated by the Spirit. These core elements of Christian leadership practices are the central motivation of this project. What follows is a review of relevant literature that addresses the core themes of this paper. I begin by surveying the landscape of Nepali Christianity in which leaders have been born and nurtured.

Understanding Nepali Church Leadership

Early Churches in Nepal: An Indigenous Christian Movement Till 1990, by Rajendra Rongong.¹

¹ Rajendra K. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal: An Indigenous Christian Movement Till 1990* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books, 2012).

Dr. Rajendra Rongong is an authoritative voice on the first-generation churches of Nepal. He recently published a book titled *Early Churches in Nepal*, in which he journeys through a brief history and points out key principles that shaped the early churches in Nepal, while also addressing nuances of leadership that are still in place today. In his book, Rongong outlines the political and religious landscape of the past two centuries.

Before unification in 1776, Nepal was divided into forty-six states ruled by suzerain kings and statesmen who were always at war with each other.² One visionary king, Prithvi Narayan Shah, took on a campaign to unify the nation and began to march east from his state of Gorkha.³ He conquered each state; from the Tista River in the East to the Mahakali River, a tributary of the Ganges, in the west. He called the unified land Nepal, a name he borrowed from the capital valley he ruled from. In this way, the Shah Dynasty began to rule over modern Nepal through his family bloodlines.⁴

The people of Nepal originated from two tribal traditions: the Indo-Aryans, who migrated from the South were Hindus, speaking languages derived from Sanskrit; and the Tibeto-Burmans, who were Buddhists, came from Mongols in the North, beyond the Himalayas.⁵ Culturally, Nepal is a melting pot of these two sociocultural and religious groups. Religion in Nepal, in many respects, is syncretistic. Animism is widely practiced by the Nepali people, especially in isolated villages. According to Rongong, “Religion plays a very important role in the lives of the people of Nepal. So much so that people do

² Ibid., 12-13.

³ Ibid., 25-26.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 11.

not see any difference between religion and culture. Because of the predominance of Hinduism, very often Nepali cultures overlap religion to the extent that they are indistinguishable. And because of this, Hinduism is more often than not regarded as Nepali culture.”⁶ This inextricable link between culture and religion makes it very difficult to differentiate one from the other.

Rongong has identified some key historical events that preceded the dawning of Christianity in this environment. The first was the founding of Nepal as a sovereign nation in 1776. At that time, Christian missionaries and other Christian activity was banned for almost two hundred years. Yet following the breakdown of this old order, the border finally opened through perseverance in prayer and persistence of missionary efforts.⁷ The passionate missionary endeavors that brought Christianity into Nepali sustained it as well. One fruit was that it imprinted a mission-minded ethos into the DNA of the church.

In the early nineteenth century, in the wake of other missionary movements across the world, Nepalis were mobilized. During this time, Nepalese sought to leave the country for work, business, education, religious pilgrimage, and various other reasons. They joined the workforce of British India, particularly in tea estates in the north, where they were often evangelized by missionaries. There, Nepali churches were established

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ This was evident in some isolated incidents taking place along the borders of India, such as Ganga Prasad Pradhan penetrating Nepal through his printing of literature. Pradhan’s own family journeyed into Nepal in 1813 only to be sent back out for preaching the gospel. Sadhu Sundar Singh was persecuted along the eastern border, and other missionaries entered in such as Dewan, Mukhia, and others. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 35.

and training of the first Nepali evangelists and future pastors commenced.⁸ Rev. William Carey of the Baptist Missionary Society, who worked relentlessly in India, was the first to impact Nepalis through the production and distribution of Nepali literature, including beginning the translation of the first Nepali Bible.⁹ Since its inception, the growth of Christianity among Nepalese in India has been rapid. There were an estimated 130 Christians in 1880, which grew to 2,500 by 1900. The first known Nepali convert, Bhimdal Dewan, was baptized in 1874 in Darjeeling.¹⁰

Rev. Ganga Prasad Pradhan, a notable character in Nepali church history, was educated in India as well. He completed the first translation of the Nepali Bible.¹¹ The New Testament took four years (1894-1897), but he then continued until he completed the entire Bible in 1914.¹² Furthermore, he ran a printing press, published the first newspaper in Nepali, and wrote over twenty books and pamphlets. He was visionary and innovative as he ministered to his homeland.

The year 1951 marks the date of Nepal's independence and the establishment of democracy. This is when the first missionaries entered and began the work that served as scaffolding from which the first Nepali churches were built. The first church was

⁸ Darjeeling Hills Bible School was established in the Mirik, Darjeeling district of India in 1954. Just across the border, it had the very purpose of training pastors and evangelists for Nepal. A story can be found on the World Mission Prayer League webpage. See World Mission Prayer League, "Darjeeling Hills Bible School: Sixty Years in Ministry," *wmpl.org.*, copyright 2005-2020, accessed October 22, 2019, <https://wmpl.org/darjeeling-sixty/>.

⁹ William Carey initiated the translation of Nepali New Testament, which took almost a century to finish. It was completed in 1914. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 28, 35-36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 37.

established in 1952 in Ram Ghat, Pokhara. The second and third began within a year in Kathmandu, and the fourth in 1954 in Tansen, Palpa.¹³ The first members of the church included expatriates and Nepalese. Missionaries established clinics and hospitals, educational institutions, and development and livelihood projects. The first missionaries in Pokhara established “The Shining Hospital,” named after the corrugated sheet metal from which it was built.¹⁴

Noteworthy Characteristics of the Nepali Church

Many groups of missionaries began to flow from Europe and two particular areas of India, namely Mar Thoma Church of South India, and Darjeeling in West Bengal state of India. But, according to Rongong, “when it came to establish a church the Nepalese were given the leadership.”¹⁵ The missionaries agreed to pull resources together to work at various fronts in Nepal. They entered into agreements with Nepal’s government; but with each came stipulations prohibiting missionaries and expatriates from preaching or proselytizing.¹⁶ Even so, within the first two years of missionaries’ entry, the first five churches were established, each one led by Nepali leaders.¹⁷ Rongong provided a wealth

¹³ Ibid., 47-48.

¹⁴ Ibid., 48.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 58.

¹⁷ The first five churches were: 1. Ram Ghat Church 1952; 2. Assembly of God, Nepalgunj 1953; 3. Bethshalom, Putali Sadak Church 1953; 4. Nepal Isai Mandali, Gyaneswor 1957; and 5. Tansen Church 1959. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 59-78.

of information through his study of sixteen of the early churches. In these reports, we discover these following noteworthy characteristics of the Nepali church, many of which are accurate up to current times.¹⁸

Trust in God and the Power of Prayer: In the tradition of the century-long missionaries' labor along the Nepal boarder, the founders of the first churches trusted God and depended on the power of prayer against all odds. Buddhi Sagar Gautam and his pastor David Mukhia, leaders of the first church, testified, "The Lord listened to our prayer and the door for Pokhara was opened."¹⁹ Many were attracted to and stayed in the churches because they found prayer to be powerful in changing lives. Prayer sustained the church through the era of persecution.

Indigenous and Self-Sustaining Church: Rongong claims, "Churches in Nepal began as indigenous churches. They had no official connection to established churches or denominations outside the country."²⁰ Missionaries were strictly prohibited from preaching Christianity, so "this necessitated and paved the way for Nepalese leadership in the churches."²¹ Of the sixteen churches studied by Rongong, over ninety percent of them claimed that, "[their] church is independent and has no links with any other churches outside Nepal."²² This is one of the vital marks of the early Nepali churches.

¹⁸ Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 79-102.

¹⁹ Ibid., 60.

²⁰ Ibid., 75.

²¹ Ibid., 74.

²² Ibid., 81, 83.

Growth through Lay Evangelism: One characteristics of the early church was dynamic personal witnessing, both inside the church but even more so in the community outside. Every member of the church felt an urge to witness. They shared the gospel to family members, relatives, and neighbors, even at the risk of being exposed and persecuted.²³ “These people, who were virtually the leaders, would risk arrest rather than stop witnessing for their Lord.”²⁴ And as a result, many heard and accepted the gospel. Several studies show that the majority of the believers during the persecution era came to faith through the testimony of a family member or close friend.²⁵ Zealous evangelism has been one of the main causes of church growth in Nepal.

Resilience through Persecution: Persecution was an inescapable part of the early churches in Nepal. After eight years of ministry, Pastor David Mukhia, the first pastor of the first church was issued an arrest warrant.²⁶ In the year 1959, the king reclaimed power and enforced the *Panchayat* system of governance²⁷. This marked the beginning of the modern era of persecution. According to Rongong, almost every church leader during this period spent at least one term in prison.²⁸ The church during the *Panchayat* era was under

²³ Ibid., 149.

²⁴ Ibid., 79.

²⁵ Rongong’s study confirmed what Norma Kehrberg in her book, *Cross in the Land of the Khukuri* had found; that family members reaching other members was initially the primary means of evangelism. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 76, 116-117; and Norma Kehrberg, *Cross in the Land of the Khukuri* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books, 2000), 149.

²⁶ Ibid., 61.

²⁷ *Panchayat* comes from the Nepali word for five. It was a system of governance instigated by King Tribhuvan Shah in 1962, as an effort to manage power through five leaders per each Village Development Committee loyal to him, but was later overhauled in 1990. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 126.

²⁸ Ibid., 119-120.

constant harassment from the government. Democracy allowed freedom of religion, but the law prohibited conversion. That same year, the government cracked down on the church and jailed eleven members of Tansen Church, sentencing them to six years in prison. Yet, this period of persecution served as fuel for church growth.²⁹ Rongong claims, “The very harsh measures used for eradicating Christianity from the country served more to build a strong foundation for the churches to come.”³⁰ Furthermore, to the watching world, “Persecution became stimulus to genuine enquiry about Christianity [in Nepal]”.³¹

Emphasis on Local Leadership: The research of over sixteen of the early churches showed that from 1953-1990, each church started was led by a Nepali indigenous leader; although, in many cases, foreign missionaries assisted in training those leaders.³² Rongong observes, “The way they [expatriate members] helped the church to become established, and did everything to teach, encourage and support the church in every way they could, being careful not to impose their own ideas, was very important.”³³ One result of this wise collaboration was that churches were able to endure the harsh circumstances of the early years, thus continuing to grow and thrive.

Frequency of Healing: Healing has been associated with Christianity since the days of Jesus Christ. The quickest way into a human heart is through physical experience.

²⁹ Ibid., 79.

³⁰ Ibid., 103.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 61-62.

³³ Ibid., 62.

The first missionaries established leprosy hospitals, like Green Pastures, in Pokhara in 1957.³⁴ Every church in Nepal, some more than others, have testified that healing has been an essential means by which people have come to faith. Healing was not only a phenomenon by which people came to faith, but also what initially attracted many leaders to the ministry. Rongong notes, “Healing was so popular that there was a danger of spiritual power overshadowing the concept of salvation.”³⁵ Regardless of the implications, this has been a noticeable characteristic of the Nepali church throughout its short history.

The indigenous Nepali church prides itself in this great wealth of experience and exponential growth over the last half of the twentieth century. God has done amazing things in the short life of the church in Nepal. We, as third generation leaders, have been given a rich heritage. We have the awesome responsibility of leading this expanding church, with all its joys and complexities. The greatest challenge the Nepali church now faces is leadership development adequate for the church in context. The responsibility of leaders in our generation is monumental. We must learn to embrace historical and cultural strengths, discern corruptive powers, biblically scrutinize every principle, and then format a balanced arrangement for training pastoral leaders.

³⁴ Shining Hospital was the first mission hospitals. After some time, Green Pasture Hospital came out of it to specialize in treating leprosy. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 48.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

Leadership as an Adaptive Process of Change

Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters by D. Scott Cormode.³⁶

Max DePree has said, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.”³⁷ Defining reality is the essence of leadership; making spiritual sense of reality is the essence of Christian leadership. According to Professor D. Scott Cormode, “The first duty of a Christian leader is to provide a Christian perspective, an interpretative framework for people who want to live faithful lives.”³⁸ People are raised within cultural settings where they are taught to make sense of the world around them. According to their experience, they formulate mental categories in which to fit their world and changing circumstances. A leader’s job is to use pre-legitimated mental pictures to help people make sense of their realities in order to bring about transformation.³⁹

The leaders God chose for his people had the primary responsibility to make God known in every circumstance of their lives. God revealed himself in history. He spoke through prophets, priests and kings who were appointed to help people make spiritual sense of their common experience. They provided a divine perspective on life in every circumstance. Jesus, as God’s self-revelation, spoke and acted in all human terms. He interpreted and reframed the law for the people as God intended it to be understood. In

³⁶ D. Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Meaning: Christian Leadership as Spiritual Interpreters* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

³⁷ Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 11.

³⁸ Cormode, *Making Spiritual Meaning*, xi.

³⁹ According to Cormode, people use culturally pre-legitimated ideas to make sense of new situations. Leaders then help shape this repertoire of meaning. See 14, 23. Cormode, *Making Spiritual Meaning*, 14, 23.

the Sermon on the Mount, for example, Jesus illustrated the coming kingdom of God by drawing on the cultural resources around him.⁴⁰ He showed the apostles a vision of God through faithful obedience lived out within a community. It is no wonder that the paradigm Jesus established remains effective in changing people's lives, even two thousand years later.

Leaders stand in the front to help others make sense of their world. The goal of leadership is formation through internalization of new interpretations, not merely transmission of knowledge. "Pastors lead by helping God's people use theological categories and frameworks to make spiritual sense,"⁴¹ says Cormode. They help people internalize habits using theological categories. Since leaders cannot control, but only shape the meaning that people make, divine intervention in human capacity becomes necessary in making spiritual sense.⁴² If the correct way of understanding Christian leadership is "theological interpretation to make spiritual meaning," then pastors as theologically equipped leaders are the key to shaping a culture.⁴³ They bring the prophetic voice of God into the lives of their people. This is different from other forms of leadership in that God's special revelation in Jesus Christ is at the heart of a community desiring to live faithful lives.

Leaders have many cultural resources in their toolbox. Cormode discusses six such resources they have at their disposal, namely: community, beliefs, values, goals and

⁴⁰ Ibid., 49-54.

⁴¹ Ibid., 48.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

purposes, narrative and rituals, and practices.⁴⁴ He calls them resources because they function as building blocks that leaders can use to construct their interpretations of the world.⁴⁵ They are effective because they are built on a shared vision. While structural resources like money and policies can be limited in supply and influence, cultural resources have greater influence in shaping worldviews and communities. Meaning-making leadership uses cultural resources to bring about change, because those tools have native power to make sense and create an internal desire for change of minds and behaviors.

If leadership is helping people define reality and adapt to the inevitability of change, adaptive leadership is helping people navigate through the process of change. It also means that a leader gets trained by acquiring knowledge and practicing skills, because transformation begins with the leader. There is no doubt then, that only mentoring for pastoral formation can provide adequate accountability to ensure such adaptive change. In the Nepali church, one of the greatest challenges is raising pastoral leaders with enough theological interpretative framework to lead Christ-centered churches.⁴⁶ Equipping pastors in sub-literate cultures like Nepal, where people depend even more on cultural means to leadership, wisdom is in the ability to recognize cultural resources and employ them to bring about change. In order to best facilitate that course of change, mentoring must become part of the leadership formation process.

⁴⁴ Cormode explains and illustrates these six cultural aspects pastoral leaders use to guide adaptive process of change in a church context. Cormode, *Making Spiritual Meaning*, 63-116.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁶ The phrase “interpretive framework” is a means by which leaders make sense of reality. Cormode, *Making Spiritual Meaning*, 9.

Mentoring for Pastoral Formation

The Potter's Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation, by Brian A. Williams.⁴⁷

Pastoral formation happens best through mentoring. Brian Williams, in his book *The Potter's Rib*, explores the practices of great mentors of the past two millennia to extract principles on mentoring. He has presented a wealth of wisdom on the nature of pastoral formation through studying church history. He begins with some probing questions that Gregory of Nazianzus asked in the fourth century: “Who is the man or woman prepared to take up this [pastoring] role? How does formation for pastoral ministry take place? What is required to walk between presumption and obedience?”⁴⁸ In response, he summarizes: “Mentoring is not self-mastery for the sake of self-sufficiency, it does not provide us with rational techniques for the sake of speedy progress... instead, mentoring for pastoral formation is grounded in a deepening friendship, that is turned toward the work of Christ and the Spirit.”⁴⁹

To the age-old question of Gregory, Williams argues that formation is a journey in which integrity of heart to the Spirit's forming of a person, is of the greatest value. He says, “Our spiritual formation is the soil in which grow the skills of pastoral ministry—preaching, teaching, counseling.”⁵⁰ Amidst the seductive powers of ego, prestige and acclamation, mentoring is the quiet call to integrity and learning; the grace to

⁴⁷ Brian A. Williams, *The Potter's Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

walk coherently and consistently in life. Pastoral formation is more than a set of skills or inherent genius to be uncovered. Williams points to Kierkegaard's compelling vision of the difference between a genius and a pastor. He says, "Whereas a genius is born, a pastor is called." "Whereas a genius is solitary, a pastor is sent to others." And, "Whereas the authority of the genius is self-derived, that of the pastor is derived from another."⁵¹ Pastors are stewards serving the cause of their Master wherever he calls them, and this is not always in the place of his or her choice.

Of the many historical figures who practiced mentoring, one that stands out is St. Augustine of Hippo. Although known in history for his contributions to theology, apologetics, and philosophy, St. Augustine was at the deepest level of his heart and ministry a pastor and a mentor.⁵² He wrote over five hundred letters, most to pastor friends and students under the weight of ministry. He admired and praised his mentor Bishop Valerius, who believed in him amidst the immaturities of his youth.⁵³ As Augustine was mentored into ministry, he went on to mentor many bishops through personal contact and letters. He established a learning community in his monastery with diverse members ranging from freed slaves, to aristocrats, and even young boys.⁵⁴

Williams endorses the words of Frederic Van der Meer, "Augustine recognized that he could render no greater service to the Church in his part of the world than to

⁵¹ Ibid., 24-25.

⁵² Edward L. Smither says, "My contention is that Augustine effectively mentored spiritual leaders and set them apart for needed ministries in the church and that many aspects of his mentoring will serve as instructive for the modern mentor." See Edward L. Smither, *Augustine as Mentor: A Model for Preparing Spiritual Leaders* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 2.

⁵³ Williams, *The Potter's Rib*, 193.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 196.

prepare new priests for service.”⁵⁵ And why did he do it? Williams stresses: “His motivation to carry on this unflagging epistolary mentoring was chiefly his love for the church and secondarily his love for the individual pastor,”⁵⁶ Above all, it was his friendships that won him favor during his life and throughout history. His biographer, Possidius, wrote with gratitude and of his desire to imitate Augustine, saying, “with whom God gave me the happiness to live in friendship for forty years.”⁵⁷

Williams argues that the church in our time has been hijacked by the academia of the past millennia.⁵⁸ He bemoans the fact that preparation of pastors has been yielded to academic institutions, which prepare intellectuals, but not necessarily shepherds. He claims that the fact, “That most preparation for pastoral ministry takes place exclusively in the seminary or university instead of in partnership with a church or a more experienced pastor is more an accident of history than the result of careful theological deliberation.”⁵⁹ This departure has led to the detriment of many modern churches, and there is a desperate need for the church to return to preparing shepherds by way of mentoring.

It is no wonder that modern churches struggle with issues beyond what our textbooks have taught us to resolve. Pastoral ministry is about handling relationships that

⁵⁵ Frederic Van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: Life and Works of a Father of the Church*, trans. Brian Battershaw and G. R. Lamb (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), 200, quoted in Williams, *The Potter's Rib*, 196.

⁵⁶ Williams, *The Potter's Rib*, 200.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁵⁸ Williams argues that in the recent past, institutions have been entrusted to prepare pastors for ministry, but have failed to do so effectively. Williams, *The Potter's Rib*, 53.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

techniques cannot solve. “Preparations for pastoral ministry” claims Williams, “is not a matter of graduation, ordination, conversion, or individual will. Instead it is a matter of *calling* and *formation* in the company of others.”⁶⁰ There is a lot more that goes into pastoral formation than the cognitive exercise of academic enterprise. It requires collective wisdom gleaned from a community in practice, and pastoral learning happens best within a worshipping community. Mentoring requires living within a context and culture over many seasons of life; deliberately learning alongside diverse individuals. Therefore, healthy mentoring should take place within a worshipping body.

Mentoring for pastoral formation puts Christ at the center of relationships, and offers the eyes, ears, voices and hands of pastors, priests, and ministers to younger or less experienced leaders.⁶¹ Mentors allow for the intervention of the Holy Spirit in sorting out the dynamic aspects of the relationship toward pastoral formation. As Williams says, “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, mentors play host to mentees and help them discern those obstacles that slow or inhibit their formation as persons in Christ and as pastors for Christ.”⁶² Mentors and mentees meet on a regular basis to untangle life within the dynamics of Christ-centered relationships.

Mentoring was Jesus’ model of training the apostles. In this model the “Spirit generated desire, a certain aptness or competence for ministry, and the recognition and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁶¹ Williams argues that pastors offer their sense organs to give, receive, and mentor effectively. Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 112-163.

⁶² Ibid., 91.

confirmation by the church—all three of which ought to be present and discernible.”⁶³ The process is aimed at unearthing the potential of the mentee, and empowering him or her to engage in God’s Kingdom work with the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit comes alongside in the process, and in doing so, he is in the vocation of mentoring ministry.⁶⁴ Mentors work in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Theology underlies every aspect of pastoral work. According to Williams, “Pastors ought to be the ‘resident theologians’ for their churches and ought to cultivate and practice theologically determined ministry.”⁶⁵ Theology in practice is more readily caught, because mentoring ensures effectiveness through close accountability. “Practical theologizing is near the center of pastoral ministry and the center of the mentoring relationship.”⁶⁶ Mentoring is effective when a person is learning through guided reflections. And mentees learn more from practitioners who are known to them from real-life narratives, expressed through words within genuine relationships. In this way, lessons are conveyed in a faithful and embodied way that enables mentees to actualize their calling.⁶⁷

While education and skills are essential, a mentor provides the accountability necessary to draw out desired characteristics. Mentoring is a process in which mentors,

⁶³ Williams agrees with Richard Niebuhr, Charles Spurgeon, and John Newton. Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 171.

⁶⁴ According to John 14:26, the Holy Spirit is the *paraclete*, Counselor and Advocate who calls and walks along with us in the mentoring process.

⁶⁵ Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 174.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Williams illustrates pastoral *Sapience* and *Habitus* through the life of mentoring pastor St. Augustine and others. Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 52.

according to Williams, “should impel the mentee toward the *telos* of their apprenticeship—clarification of their self-understanding as a person in Christ and a pastor to Christ’s church,”⁶⁸ The first step in the process of mentoring is the assurance of identity, an understanding of who they are in Christ. According to Augustine, pastoral *habitus* is the disposition that leads one to love God in another person.⁶⁹ Mentors ensure these affections mature in the preparation phase.

Mentoring is conditioning for the long haul in ministry. “Mentoring for pastoral formation” says Williams, “works to subvert the image of the lone-ranger or CEO pastor and instead cultivate truthful dependence, humility, and teachableness.”⁷⁰ When leadership deceptions creep in, mentors provide tools for direction and pace. Regular checkups and evaluations throughout the process are necessary; both to measure progress and set a healthy pace for sustained personal health and community wellbeing.

Mentoring is an urgent call for the church in Nepal. Academically trained pastors are scarce; and theological training that does take place is limited. While theological training is necessary, mentorship needs to be the primary platform from which readiness for ministry is evaluated. For this, a robust curriculum on mentoring needs to be formatted for contextual training of pastors, which is in part the scope of this project.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 92.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 88.

⁷¹ Chapter 5 of this doctoral project provides a training manual on mentoring for pastoral formation.

Spiritual Disciplines for Pastoral Formation

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry by Ruth H. Barton.⁷²

Spiritual leaders are often so busy teaching, preaching, caring, and giving that their own soul gets depleted in the process. Jesus said, “What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?” (Mt 16:26). In the business of caring for the souls of others, pastors and leaders risk losing their own. This is the tension Ruth Haley Barton addresses in her book, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*.⁷³

Barton studies the principles of spiritual leadership from the life of Moses, identifying the secrets to the success of his prophetic ministry, and shows their relevance in lives of leaders today. Moses was a spiritual leader in his time and context, leading people under extremely challenging conditions. The task of leadership was beyond his life’s learnings and acquired skill sets, and he undertook responsibilities he was not trained for. What enabled him was his persistent encounter with God, that was the place where his heart and life were being formed. “The soul-full leader” says Barton, “creates the conditions that set us up for an encounter with God in the places where we need it most. [They] continually seek God in the crucible of ministry no matter how hard it

⁷² Ruth H. Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

gets.”⁷⁴ The best thing pastoral leaders bring to their leadership is their own transformed selves by staying in the presence of God.⁷⁵

Moses was born an Israelite and grew up in Pharaoh’s palace, perhaps under the frustrations of living fully in neither world. He acted on his heart’s convictions, and finding himself abandoned and unaccepted, fled and settled in a foreign land. Searching for his identity, he ultimately found it in the crucible of solitude in Midian. Barton makes this observation: “Moses discovered what we all must discover: that solitude is the place of our conversion. In solitude we stop believing our own press. If we stay in solitude long enough, we become safe enough with ourselves and with God.”⁷⁶ A spiritual leader must arrive at this realization before moving forward.

What differentiates spiritual leadership from other models is this: spiritual leadership is “lead[ing] consistently from the soul—the place of my own encounter with God—rather than leading primarily from my head, my unbridled activism, or my performance-oriented driven-ness.”⁷⁷ In the course of ministry, leaders often slide into believing in their false self. They work out of a sense of identity hinged on their work, achievement and perceived success that people applaud, forgetting that their calling and delight lies in communion with God. Leadership roles, says Barton, “give a lot of fodder to the ego”⁷⁸ Removing one’s identity from that spotlight is next to impossible. Entering

⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 30-31.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 51-52.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 31.

and dwelling with God at the soul level will eventually free the leader from bondage to the expectations of others and their own inner compulsion to perform. When they experience at the soul level that they are deeply loved by God, they are freed from these external factors. This, in turn, enables leaders to handle enormous amounts of success and failure without losing their own identity.⁷⁹

The challenge is to “keep seeking tenaciously after God through spiritual disciplines that keep us grounded in the presence of God at the center of our being.”⁸⁰ In silence and solitude we learn to live within our own limitations; we learn desperation for what lies beyond us, and in humility cry out to God to step in and carry us through.⁸¹ Because, says Barton, "In solitude we are rescued from relentless human striving to solve challenges to experience the life of the Spirit... In silence we give up control and allow God to be God in our life."⁸² Spiritual leaders are forged for pastoral ministry in the crucible of solitude and silence.

A general problem in the church is that when leaders lose their souls, their churches and organizations naturally follow.⁸³ And according to Barton, when this happens, the church slips into mediocrity and is unable to give life.⁸⁴ Lives flourish when leaders lead from the soul level. When they are connected with the source, their tank

⁷⁹ Ibid., 210.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 28-29.

⁸³ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 13.

never runs dry. And this not only keeps them full, but enables them to renew the whole community. When leaders travel through a path of solitude and silence, through the desert seasons of life, they are prepared for spiritual leadership. Apart from this journey of their own soul, they cannot be adequately prepared to lead others in the course.

Spiritual leadership is a journey one must live through in order to lead others.

One neglected area in pastoral leadership is the importance of community in leadership. Leaders, by virtue of their duty, gradually insulate themselves within their fields of expertise; they can become good at dispatching knowledge, all the while, living in isolation.⁸⁵ They frame a good system for others, yet exempt themselves from it. But Christian leadership demands the presence of a practicing community. Spiritual community, Barton insists, is gathered around Christ, where “what we do flows out of who we are in [him].”⁸⁶ It has to be a lived experience, illustrated through the testimony of the disciples, “we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen.” (Jn 3:11). There is a need for spiritual rhythm in the life of a leader, rhythm that illustrates their dependence and trust in God and their commitment to the community. Spiritual leadership demands living humbly and submissively to the Spirit of Christ, who grants true wisdom. In answer to Moses’ prayers to be delivered from the burdens of leading over 600,000 petulant people,⁸⁷ God gave a portion of his spirit of anointing to other

⁸⁵ Barton argues about community in leadership in Chapter 11. Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 168-187.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

trusted leaders who shared his load. Barton calls this a “shared spirit” in the community of practice.⁸⁸ This demands humility and commitment to an authentic community.

Spiritual discipline is a lifelong journey a pastoral leader must themselves walk. Nepali pastors have a long way to go in the course of these disciplines. There is a serious deficit of active listening in the culture, and more so, in the practices of silence and solitude. Although there is vibrant growth in the evangelical church, there is a lack of corresponding depth in spiritual disciplines. A wise leader, seeing the deficit, would do well to seek out a mentor who can provide spiritual direction, and help them avoid common leadership pitfalls. To set course in that directions, the following chapters address how mentored means of pastoral formation can best meet the needs of the Nepali churches.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 172.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGY OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP IN NEPAL

The Nepali church of the early twenty-first century is known throughout the world for its exponential growth through rigorous evangelism. Although Nepali churches have grown exponentially, the proportionate development of leaders has lagged behind. Many young leaders who are gifted in evangelism have not valued higher theological education or foundational spiritual disciplines. But as a result, churches have grown only as mature as their leaders. These shallow roots have been the single greatest challenge to the contemporary Nepali church. Therefore, looking into the future of preparation for pastoral leaders, it is evident that theological education and a commitment to mentorship in the spiritual disciplines will be the key to constructing healthier leadership models. But first, looking back throughout the history of the Nepali church, we discover several key underlying assumptions that have thwarted the leadership training process. The following are some of the more prominent ones:

Overemphasis on Evangelism: Early missionaries came to Nepal from various countries and denominations, but it was their commitment to sharing the gospel that was the common heart-cry they poured into the first-generation Nepali churches. This was

initially the main reason for the growth of the church. Those who came to faith went out and witnessed to their family and neighbors, and this practice is still reaping a harvest today. The church was and continues to be blessed by this evangelical vigor of its first two generations. But this has, in turn, contributed to the common belief that numerical growth is the end goal of the church. It is not uncommon to find Nepali churches over twenty years old still limited to preaching “believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved” to a room full of believers. Somewhere along the way in these churches, the leadership short circuited the learning process and began stagnating in its mission. The very thing that was good and necessary became a hindrance to greater and more holistic growth.

Association with Prosperity: Christianity is generally seen as a Western religion in Nepal. This is largely due to the many missionaries and missions supported by churches and organizations from the America, Europe, and Australia. In the past decades, South Korea has become a significant source of mission work in Nepal. This inevitably associates Christianity with the wealth and power of the West. In this way, physical benefits are thought to be closely associated with spiritual adherence. Pastors have also played along with the prosperity gospel by pronouncing physical blessings on those who believe. Because of this, many people living in extreme poverty find the church attractive and venture to believe in hopes of material blessings. When offered the gospel, many ask “What’s in it for me? A physical healing? A job? Security? Scholarships for children’s education? Relief aid in times of need?” In an impoverished country like Nepal, physical and external forces often far outweigh spiritual and internal motivations. Because of such stereotypes, there have been many distorted motivations for following Jesus.

Expectation of Miracles: The majority of Nepali churches have been birthed out of charismatic movements.¹ The Assemblies of God is the largest church denomination in Nepal.² Most independent churches also tend to be Pentecostal or charismatic in nature. In many of these churches, outward expressions of the Holy Spirit are of the greatest importance. It is quite common to meet Christians who have come to faith through an experience of healing in their own life or in the life of a family member. No doubt, healing and miracles are ways that God uses to lead people to himself. However, churches in Nepal are also filled with people who are disappointed at a lack of the healing and miracles they desire. In fact, many go to church merely for healing and miracles. Many attend church as a form of insurance, just in case someone in their family falls ill. Pastors often encourage this mindset because it keeps people coming and causes numerical growth, which, in turn helps supply the budget and keep projects running. Such a mindset has been the source of faulty ecclesiology and faulty practices of pastoral leadership.

Leadership Entitlements: Leaders in Nepal often have an entitlement mindset. Many believe that leadership should be given as the result of hard-earned badges of honor, much like in the military. Political leaders in Nepal often emerge through this pattern of respect earned from hardships they have endured. This entitlement mindset has

¹ Rajendra K. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal: An Indigenous Movement Till 1990* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books, Nepal, 2012), 101,122.

² Although statistics are not available, this writer has close association with senior leaders of the Assemblies of God, who claims over twelve hundred churches had been planted by 2015.

also infiltrated church leadership.³ The era of the first-generation church leaders was a period of persecution and hardship. These leaders commonly risked arrest, torture, and even death itself; yet they never abandoned witnessing.⁴ This accelerated church growth in the first two generations.⁵ But, after leading for a decade or so, leaders often felt entitled to senior leadership honors and sustained support from the church. Many even assumed the prerogative of appointing upcoming leaders who were loyal to them. As a result, nepotism has become a common practice in Nepali churches. Family members assume entitlement, and are entrusted important leadership positions, rather than gifted and elected leaders being appointed. Furthermore, with the limited resources available, churches feel unable to invest in new and emerging leaders.⁶ Although these patterns of leadership selection are slowly changing, these old deeply rooted habits refuse to die off easily.

There are many other factors which have contributed to the shaping of a culture of pastoral leadership with an inadequate theology and a faulty ecclesiology. There are, for example, cultural dynamics that have contributed, such as the caste system and class consciousness affecting leadership in churches that have risen out of persecution and poverty. There are dilemmas with missions as well, such as a rise in foreign

³ When a senior pastor of a good size church in Kathmandu passed away from cancer, the current elder said, in a personal interview with this author, “I have been in this church since the beginning. I am the natural pastor in line, who else?”

⁴ Rongong hails many of these first-generation church leaders. See Rongong, *The Early Churches in Nepal*, 79.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ This phenomenon is evident in many of the local churches’ reluctance to pay the tuition and fees of their students studying at Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary.

denominations supporting Nepali churches. Another influence on leadership is that the pastoral theology, taught in training schools and seminaries, is often a loosely contextualized version adopted from the Western textbooks.⁷ A new contextually appropriate ecclesiology is needed in order to equip pastoral leaders for the church in Nepal. For this, we turn to the biblical ecclesiology, refined throughout church history, to find solutions to the challenges facing the modern Nepali churches. And then with those tools, a curriculum to equip pastoral leaders will be formatted.

A Study of Pastoral Leadership in Scripture

The Triune God and Creator, as sovereign over creation, presents himself as provider and sustainer. He is a personal being in perfect relationship within the Triune family as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Human beings were created in his image and bear his nature and characteristics. They are called to bear his image through the cultural mandate (Gn 1:28). They are called to stewardship, which is the working out of his sovereignty – of authority and service, over everything he has created. Human beings are co-creators and ministers of God’s created order and purpose. In that, God has invested on them an essence of the *telos* of the creation.

God’s purpose in creation was to have dominion over all creation administered through his image bearers, human beings. Their fall into sin, however, corrupted every aspect of life. This bares its starkest expression in human beings’ abuse of the power and authority entrusted to them. Adam and Eve challenged God by wanting to be his equal

⁷ Pastoral Theology taught in seminaries like Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary in Nepal use textbooks by American authors like John MacArthur, Thomas C. Oden, Larry Crabb, et al.

and by defying orders instead of representing him. They desired to “become like God,” “knowing good and evil” (Gn 3:5). In this way, they hoped to live forever. All of these things were already offered to them by their creator; but they wanted it in their own way and for their own sake. Proudful, defiant, and self-seeking against a sovereign God, they committed treason. They fell into sin. God granted them the desires of their heart, allowing them to go their own way. This led to the curse of separation from their God and eventually to death. In search of power and a kingdom of their own, people continue to defy God. Of all vocations, leadership is the first in this line of danger. Sinful people have a tendency to reject God’s vision for leadership and his kingdom; thus leaders, left to their own desires and devices, use their power to try and take the place of God.

God is holy and absolute sovereign. He is set apart from the created order of the universe, yet he engages in and relates to it through the framework of covenant. He appointed specific ways by which he intervenes and submits himself to working through the framework of the covenantal relationship. He identifies himself as the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. His proper name, YHWH, means a “covenant-faithful” God (Dt 7:9),⁸ who never relents from his original purpose and mission in creation. He interacts with the whole creation by means of covenant partnerships, which he establishes on his terms.

He called Abraham, the father of the Christian faith, into this covenant by saying, “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your

⁸ The word YHWH, translated as LORD appears close to eight thousand times in the Bible, referring to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a covenant faithful God.

descendants after you” (Gn 17:7). Through Abraham, the nation of Israel was called into this covenantal relationship in which they would represent their God to all the nations of the earth. Israel, as a nation, inherited this covenant and became a people called and sent out by God to represent his rule over the creation as ambassadors of his kingship.

The Bible records specific ways that this covenant was enacted in and through the leaders of God’s people. Prophets, priests, judges, and kings were God’s means of bringing his rule to his covenant people of Israel—and through them, his rule to the rest of the creation. The prophets, priests, judges, and kings were called the shepherds of Israel (Zec 3:10, Ez 34). Moses was called by God to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt and then lead them through the journey in the wilderness for over forty years. In the wilderness, Israel learned to be a nation of priests (Ex 19:5-6). Moses was a prophet who heard God speak and then mediated those words to his people (Dt 18:15-18). He embodied covenant leadership. He also enacted a type of priesthood in that he met with God and from God’s presence mediated his holiness to his people. Moses prayed, asked for forgiveness, and interceded between God and Israel. In this way, he saved Israel from impending wrath and destruction (Ex 32:11-14, 27-30; Heb 11:28). Moses was a shepherd who lived in the presence of God (Ex 33:7-17). And from that posture he led Israel out of slavery, through the wilderness, and into God’s purposes in the Promised Land (Is 63:11).

Shepherding is the imagery God chose to describe proper leadership over the people of Israel (Gn 48:15; Ez 34:10,15; Zec 11:4, Ez 34:23). It is leadership as God himself would have it. God referred to himself as the shepherd of Israel (Ps 28:9, 80:1, 23:1, Ez 34:15). With God’s authority and power, prophets, priests, and kings held

leadership offices. They were called to represent God to the people; to take his laws and promises and communicate it to them. Leaders of Israel, as shepherds, were called to lead not for their name's sake, but for YHWH's name's sake (Is 48:9,11; 45:4; 66:5; Ez 34:30).⁹ This special form of leadership learned through covenant history is vastly different from any other form of leadership the world has otherwise known. It is a leadership from behind, not from the top. It is one that enables people and makes them flourish beyond what is immediately visible.

David, as king of Israel, illustrated a beautiful picture of a shepherd-leader. He was a "man after God's own heart" (1 Sm 13:14). Although he was a man, not without flaws, David employed power and authority to bring justice and hope to Israel by setting them free from the oppression of their enemies. People prospered in the land under his leadership. Through his godly leadership, Israel received the promise of a Messianic King, with a vision of a land ruled by God (2 Sm 7:13-16).¹⁰ The prophecy of a Messiah-King continued through generations to come. The prophet Ezekiel kept this vision alive with these words: "I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd" (Ez 34:23). The anticipation of a shepherd-leader continued on until the coming of the Messiah in the New Testament.

And when the Messiah finally appeared, he declared, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). As a prophet of the old order and an apostle of the new, Jesus practiced

⁹ Prophets refer to God making a covenant and of this goodness having been bestowed for the sake of his renown.

¹⁰ God promised David an heir whose throne would be established forever, a prophecy of the Messiah King to come.

a peculiar leadership as a shepherd. Shepherd leadership, although fulfilled in part throughout the Old Testament, is brought to its culmination in Jesus Christ, who is called the Good and the Great Shepherd (Heb 13:20; Jn 10:11-14).

He came to complete the unfinished business of the Old Testament shepherds. He said, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn 10:14-15). Shepherd-leadership begins with knowing, and then caring for the best interest and deepest needs of the sheep. When giving the pastoral mandate to Peter after his resurrection, Jesus asked, “Do you love me?” Then, “feed my sheep” (Jn 21:16-19). Peter not only received the call to follow him, but also a leadership responsibility as an apostle. Jesus told him, “Upon this rock, I will build my church”, over which no power of the world will overcome (Mt 16:18). In receiving this apostolic office and the mandate to lead, he was offered the “keys of the kingdom” (Mt. 16:19). These promises contained the call to shepherd, feed and look after God’s sheep. In this lies the essence of pastoral, and otherwise Christian leadership.

Paul as an apostle received the mission from Jesus to preach the gospel to the Gentile world and plant and pastor the church (Eph 3:7-8). He planted churches across the Mediterranean world. He revealed his pastoral heart when he spoke these words to the elders overseeing the church in Ephesus, “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you...I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing... You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house” (Ac 18-20). Paul sets an example of pastoral leadership to the watching world. In all his letters, he exhorted the

leaders and the believers to be the body of Christ in their unique context. He urged Timothy to be watchful of his pastoral leadership amidst the challenging context in the city of Ephesus (1Tim 1:3-11, 18-20).¹¹

Similarly, Peter also exhorts church leaders, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be” (1 Pt 5:2). Throughout the apostolic epistles in the New Testament, the apostle’s most serious concern is that the church remains true to the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. This responsibility still remains primarily in the hands of the shepherd-leaders today.

In the book of Revelation, the vision John received of the twenty-four elders bowing down to worship illustrates God’s eschatological reign over all creation. This, in essence, shows creation’s purpose fulfilled in returning honor and glory to the creator (Rv 4:4, 7:11, 19:4). It is clear that in God’s creation purpose, throughout the history of salvation, leaders have been called to stand in the breach. They have been called to mediate God’s royal authority in calling and restoring his creation to himself. A study of the prophets, priests, kings, and apostles, all of whom are God’s shepherds called and commissioned to lead his people, reveals that they do so as stewards of his sovereign authority.

God’s shepherd-leaders are called to lead in a way that people and creation may flourish to their fullest potential and bring honor to their King. Today, pastors working in the same tradition are called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and lead in similarly distinct

¹¹ Paul urges Timothy to stay in Ephesus to provide pastoral leadership amidst the challenges of false teaching, conflicts over genealogy, unnatural sexual practices, etc.

ways. This leadership is different from the leadership seen in the world that employs political means to pursue positions of power and authority. The goal of every pastoral leader should not be self-aggrandizement, but instead, “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13).

An Ecclesiology for Nepali Reformed Church

Through the biblical study considered thus far, a theology for Nepali Reformed Church can be framed. The Triune God created the universe and everything in it. He created it for a purpose and with a goal in mind. According to Genesis 1, he created human beings, man and woman (Gn 1:27), in his own image with qualities and a purpose that are consistent with his Trinitarian being. Human beings find their identity and purpose as they relate to their creator God, to each other, and to the whole creation in right relationship.

The vision for these relationships restored, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, is called Shalom. Shalom, explains Cornelius Plantinga Jr., is a “Webbing together of God, humans and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight.”¹² In the Bible, Shalom is described as “universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and savior opens doors and welcomes the

¹² Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996), 10.

creatures in whom he delights.”¹³ It is in the dynamics of these relationships and joyful interactions that all of creation finds fulfilment together with their God.

The theology of the church begins in the first pages of Scripture. When the Triune God created human beings in his image, he called them into a particular kind of relationship, illustrative in the command over the seventh day where he called for Sabbath. When God declared the seventh day holy, he blessed it and ordered his creatures to keep it (Gn 2:2-3). In this, he revealed his desire for a reciprocating relationship within the framework of covenant.

Covenant, as revealed in the Old Testament, is the nature of relationship God desires with his people (Gn 9:9-12).¹⁴ This includes God’s people, gathering before him to renew covenant vows as they receive his word and commit to live in obedience (Ex 19-20, Neh 8).¹⁵ This, in essence, is the church in the Old Testament. God is sovereign and holy, and this necessitates that he be revered and his stipulations be fully followed by his covenant partners. The tent of meeting, tabernacle, temple, and church are set-apart spaces for covenant reenactment between God and his people. The God of creation desires to dwell with his people by way of covenant design.

The church, in the covenant tradition, is the New Testament community; a people coming together in time and space to practice this communion in delight. In the New Testament, the apostles who lived alongside Jesus and received his mission, declared in

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ God made a covenant with Noah, Abraham, Phinehas, each time sealed with a sign which often involved blood, as a reminder of their covenant relationship with him (Gn 9:9-13, 17:10-11, Num 25:7-12).

¹⁵ The tent of meeting, the tabernacle, temple, and the church - set apart spaces over time with ritualistic format - were ways to reenact the covenant relationship between God and his people.

unison that the church is the body of Christ.¹⁶ The life of the church is modeled after the incarnation of Jesus Christ- his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. Jesus' call to follow him is the call to come alongside him to embody his values and principles in life. Paul's frequent call to live "in-Christ"¹⁷ is the call to be the church (Rom 6:1,11). It is the call to embody the life and teaching of Jesus in all its fullness (Eph 4:12-16). This is the call to Christ-centered community. As Bonhoeffer writes, "Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ."¹⁸ Furthermore, "It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity."¹⁹ A church that is carefully designed visibly practices the body of Christ.

Since its inception, the Nepali church has adopted culturally organic models of leadership. The majority of church leaders in the first two generations did not have formal theological education. Biblical and theological studies were not available in the country until the late eighties.²⁰ Most of the early leaders received training within their

¹⁶ Jesus, in giving the Lord's Supper, declared, "This is my body" (Mt 26; Lk 22). The apostles, in their gatherings, participated in the "breaking of the bread" as the body of Christ. Paul in I Corinthians 11 and 12 says that the church is the body of Christ.

¹⁷ Paul uses this phrase eighty-six times in his epistles, showing not only that life "in-Christ" is at the heart and core of his theology, but more so, calling Christians to a life of discipleship, living in step with Christ.

¹⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1954), 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ According to Dr. Hansung Kim, the first two Bible training institutes offering one-year curriculum were started in 1980 and 1981. The Discipleship Training Center in 1980, and Bible Ashram in 1981. See Hansung Kim, "Theological Education in Nepal," *missionexus.org.*, posted on January 1, 2017, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://missionexus.org/theological-education-in-nepal/>.

local church. They were coached and mentored, to a certain extent, and their leaders shaped their life and ministry philosophy.

As discussed above, the Nepali church's emphasis on evangelism, expressions of charismatic gifts, and traditional ways of leadership have, in many ways, short circuited it from the commitment to sustained discipleship. Calling for a deeper commitment to discipleship and spiritual discipline often turns people away from the church, because practicing them is neither easy nor attractive, but costly discipleship requires patient endurance. Nepali churches are in need of a foundation of Reformed biblical ecclesiology to strengthen and revitalize its commitment to the process of discipleship. This transformation must begin with the leadership.

Churches have grown far and wide in Nepal, but the roots are shallow and the fruits of discipleship are scarce. Professor David E. Fitch argues that numerically growing churches are not necessarily healthy churches. In fact, he claims, "If we make bigness and efficiency a goal in itself, we may leave the church void of its original calling to be the living workings of the body of Christ before a watching world."²¹ He proposes instead that the "inhabiting of local context through incarnational practices,"²² is what the church is called to be, and what attracts the hearts and lives of people to the gospel. In this regard, the Nepali church needs a restored emphasis on discipleship aligned with the body of Christ. For this to happen, the following principles must become an integral part of mentored theological training:

²¹ David E. Fitch, *The Great Give Away: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 38.

²² David Fitch, "Missional Ecclesiology TM 716" (lecture notes day 1, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, February 2015).

Church as the Body of Christ

The church must first be understood to be the body of Christ. Paul's dominant imagery in describing the church is that it is the body of Christ. He describes it vividly in 1 Corinthians 12, "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). And Christ is the head (Eph 4:15). If Christ is Lord and the church is his body, then the church must conform to the nature and character of Christ.

Bonhoeffer, speaking of the church, says, "Man was created a body, the Son of God appeared on earth in the body, he was raised in the body, in the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected fellowship of God's spiritual-physical creatures".²³ Such spiritual-physical reality is beautifully practiced in the church through taking part in the Lord's Table. The visible church must follow after the character and vision of Christ.

In his book *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, Moltmann says, "It is only where Christ alone rules, and the church listens to his voice only, that the church arrives at its truth and becomes a free and liberating power in the world."²⁴ The true church, that lives in the power of the Spirit, is the one that is mobilized under the lordship of Christ. Whether people acknowledge it or not, the Lord of all creation is the rightful Lord, irrespective of cultural or religious context. When a church submits to the headship of Christ, it begins to be shaped into and bear fruit of the body of Christ.

²³ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 20.

²⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 5.

Discipleship Oriented Church

Discipleship is the mission of the church. It is at the heart of the Great Commission. Jesus' call to the apostles to follow him was primary and all encompassing; and this same call goes out to each and every person who believes in him. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:18-20). The imperative part of this commission is the mandate to make disciples, those who obey every word Christ has commanded them.

One can be active in evangelism, yet neglect discipleship. Dallas Willard calls this "the great omission" of the great commission.²⁵ The mission of every follower of Christ is to become a disciple and then to disciple others. Furthermore, after Jesus calls his disciples to follow him, he sends them out saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you" (Jn 20:21). And he claims that the world will know his disciples both by the way that they love each other and follow him (Jn 13:35, 15:8). The missional calling of the church is, together, to embody Christ in their local context. This is done by preaching, baptizing, and teaching every member to obey Christ -in every aspect of life- which is, in essence, discipleship.

²⁵ This is the core claim of Willard in his book. See Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 5-6. Kindle Edition.

The Lord's Table Centered Church

The church as the body of Christ follows the life cycle of Christ. The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ is the prototype of the life of the church. Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn 6:53). At the Last Supper, handing them the bread and the wine, Jesus gave them this command as a ritual of an eternal covenant: "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19).

Paul says to the church in Colossae, "All things were created by him and for him... and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:16-19). And again to the Corinthian church, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me'" (1 Cor 11:23-24). This command was given by Jesus to the apostles for a habitual ritualistic practice. The apostles followed this practice of sharing the bread and the cup in their gatherings since the beginning of the church (Acts 2:42). It served to illustrate not only their participation and union in fullness of Christ, but also their communion with each other sharing in the eternal covenant. It is through the practice of the Lord's Supper that the church ritualistically reenacts the life, death, and resurrection and the future hope. This sharing is not meant to be only conceptual, but practical, illustrating the giving and receiving the life of Christ for his mission and purpose in the world. The Lord's Table must therefore be rehearsed as the heartbeat of a local church, both inside and also to the community outside.

Church as Global Outposts of *Mission Dei*

The church is much more than simply a local institution for rituals and activities. In a broader framework, churches must be understood as outposts serving the mission of God. The mission of God must be understood within the biblical framework of *mission Dei*. According to Moltmann, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”²⁶ Church exists to serve the mission of God. Furthermore, according to Moltmann, “To proclaim the gospel of the dawning kingdom is the first and most important element in the mission of Jesus, the mission of the Spirit, and the mission of the church.... Mission embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God.”²⁷ The *missio Dei* is comprehensive in scope, reaching as far out as the creation itself.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is similarly as comprehensive in scope as the *missio Dei*. The mission of God in Christ *is* the mission of the church. According to Michael Goheen, “The mission of God has created the church: it is the locus and place of God’s redeeming work. The *missio Dei* has also taken the church up into its work as an instrument. The church is sent in the power of the Spirit to continue the kingdom mission of Jesus: ‘As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’ (Jn 20:21). There is no participation in Christ’s redemption without participation in His mission.”²⁸

²⁶ Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 64.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Michael W. Goheen “‘As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You’: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology,” *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 362 (March 2009): 359.

Jesus proclaimed his mission in these words, “to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19). In giving life to the church, Jesus also offered the same mission that he himself embraced while in the world.

In this understanding of the church as outposts of *mission Dei*, the church stands as Christ’s presence within a community offering his salvation. “The church can only be properly understood in terms of its missionary calling”²⁹ according to Goheen. It follows then, that the church as the body of Christ must never be only local or global, it is by nature both and. Historically understood, the church as “One” and “Catholic” by its universal nature, assumes responsibility for reaching across every tribe, tongue, culture and nation. By effectively being the body of Christ, the church reflects the nature of the Triune God to the world.

Church as Missional Community

The church is formed to be a gathering of the followers of Christ, not merely as the sum of individuals. Goheen argues, “Since Jesus did not write a book but left behind a community to communicate the gospel of the kingdom, the church now play[s] a central role in the gospel. The church must be defined in terms of its call to bear the gospel to the world.”³⁰ This community is called to be hospitable to everyone within its reach for the sake of the gospel. Yet too often, the church’s outreach has been limited to evangelism, seeking merely verbal response to acceptance of Christ.

²⁹ Ibid., 362.

³⁰ Ibid.,

Bryan Stone, speaking of evangelism, says, “Evangelism is a practice that is performed at boundaries and along the edges of difference. Because of that, nothing could be more important to a theology of evangelism than clarifying the nature of that difference and how the Christian community’s posture toward the world along those boundaries is always one of both invitation and subversion.”³¹ Like Jesus, the church must call people to itself and then guide them to follow the hard path of the cross.

Similarly, Stuart Murray in addressing evangelism in the post-Christian West, poses this challenge: “Christianity is at heart a missionary faith and the desire of most Christians to tell the story is deeper than our reluctance to engage in activities we associate with evangelism. Why not focus on being faithful communities and trust the attractive power of the gospel to draw others to Christ and these communities?”³² A missional community is invested not only in preaching, but more so in doing life together, inhabiting neighborhoods with the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Church as Work of the Holy Spirit

The church, according to Craig Van Gelder, is a “Community Created by the Spirit.”³³ The Holy Spirit is the life breath of this community centered in Jesus Christ. When giving the Holy Spirit, Jesus referred to him as the “Counselor” or “Advocate”

³¹ Bryan Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 170.

³² Stuart Murray, *Post Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Crownhill MK: Paternoster, 2004), 225.

³³ Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). The whole book works out of the premise that “the essence of the Church is that it is a community created by the Spirit.”

who would teach and remind his people of his words (Jn 14:26). The Holy Spirit brought a special anointing to the church on the day of Pentecost. The expression of the Holy Spirit was clearly seen through the miracles and the subsequent growth.

Throughout the book of Acts, Luke records how the Great Commission was being fulfilled through the apostolic mission as they established Christ-centered churches. He says, “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers” (Acts 9:31). The church is a living dynamic organism, where God the Holy Spirit is active and causes growth.

A church mobilized by the life and breath of the Triune God will look more like him. According to Fitch, “The kingdom now depends more on our integrity than our technique, more on what the Holy Spirit will do than anything we have figured out. It is ultimately dependent on one gospel reality: Jesus is both Savior and Lord.”³⁴ The church works with a power beyond its own and produces visible fruit of the gospel. The Holy Spirit is active in convicting people to submit to the Lordship of Christ, and helping them be formed into his likeness.

Practice of Servant Leadership

Shepherding, as discussed above, is a peculiar form of leadership God chose to exercise over his people. When Jesus called the apostles to follow him, they were called to imitate his mission and walk in his footsteps. As a shepherd, Jesus cares deeply for his

³⁴ David Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw, *Prodigal Christianity: 10 Signposts into the Missional Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013), Kindle Location 4655.

flock. He not only feeds the hungry and searches for the lost, but ultimately, laid down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:11). As a last command, Jesus entrusted his disciples with the mission of feeding his sheep (Jn 21:17). In the tradition of Jesus and the apostles, pastors are called to practice servant leadership.

Todd Bolsinger, speaking of pastoral leadership, writes, “If leadership is energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world, then leadership is always relational. It is focused on a community of people who exist to accomplish a shared mission.”³⁵ Shepherding according to Scripture is a leadership vocation, it is leadership for the sake of others. Such leadership is geared towards empowering others, so that not only the shared mission is accomplished, but also each person involved can grow and flourish.

Servant leadership, according to Hunter, means, “to lead for the sake of others.”³⁶ It focuses on persons and not power, it seeks to enable others and not consume. It is to lead from a posture of humility. Servant leadership serves out of personal transformation, leading others to the same transformation that comes from being united with Christ. Pastoral leaders have the responsibility to live with Christ within the community as a source of transformation.

³⁵ Todd Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in an Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 156.

³⁶ Todd D. Hunter, *Our Character at Work: Success from the Heart of Servant Leadership* (Tucson, AZ: Watermark, 2016), 7, 9.

Conclusion

Only from adequate theological foundations can the church be rightly understood and prepared to engage the world around it. The Nepali church, similarly, needs to heed this timely call for a renewal of ecclesiology in reforming the church for its mission in the world. This is primarily the task of pastoral leaders. The process begins with the pastor's own transformation. And from there, he/she becomes the catalyst in leading the church toward the shared vision of drawing each other to follow Christ more fully.

Realigning the church to the biblical mission will mean letting go of some traditional values and models of leadership. Then, the sure way forward is through an ecclesiology that is embodied in practice. Renewal through practice is the key to the future of a healthier Nepali church. Yet, even more importantly, these practices need to become part of the curriculum in pastoral formation, as that is where foundations are laid. For such a vision to be realized, mentoring must become a core practice in the process of formation. This is the topic we now turn to in the following chapters.

PART THREE
MINISTRY PRACTICE

CHAPTER 4

TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT

Leaders in Nepal employ cultural means to rise to leadership. Church leaders have been groomed and equipped inside the culture, where theological instruction has been inadequate to properly sort out these borrowed assumptions. As noted above,¹ pastoral leaders are in need of a contextual theological framework for healthy leadership. They need the basic materials of a historically founded biblical and spiritual theology, in order to build their own practices in context.

Accountability and continued training is crucial in the formation process. Particularly, training that focuses on deconstructing cultural presuppositions and reframing leadership practices through a biblical theological paradigm. For example, pastors who have been influenced by the culture of the Hindu caste system have innately bought into the philosophy of *karma*. It is a mindset that reverts to fate and determinism, assuming that the gods are in control of every aspect of one's life and future.² One must

¹ Some of the key challenges posed against Nepali church is discussed in chapter 3.

be trained to recognize such a worldview in practice and replace it with biblical view that God is sovereign, yet desires human beings to be responsible and obedient to his creation mandates in order that they may flourish.

There is much that needs to change in the understanding and practices of Nepali churches. This will be a slow process. But, in order for changes to come about, pastoral leaders must commit to mentoring for spiritual leadership. The majority of Christians in Nepal have come to faith through experiences of healing or other physical blessings.³ These are means that God used, and still does, to bring people to himself and to the church. Yet, many churches suffer from having not moved beyond these initial material blessings, and instead, continue to seek easy answers and shallow approaches to the Christian life. A change of heart and mind requires cultural adaptation and a life that is transformed, not merely a new vocabulary for old practices. So, while it is true that spiritual growth demands that people give up their expectations, it is also true that leaders “have to fail people’s expectation at a rate they [can] stand.”⁴ This process of transformation should occur first in the life of the leader and then through his/her leadership into the life of the church. The training presented in this project is geared toward such transformation.

² Worldviews framed in a Hindu culture, based on *karma*, adhere particularly to fatalism. This is a mindset that believes in prescribed *karma* (lit. duty in life) as part of *dharma* (religion), a fate over which one has no control over. See Dor Bahadur Bista, *Fatalism and Development: Nepal’s Struggle for Modernization* (Kolkata: Orient Longman, 2008), 3-5, 29-31.

³ Dr. Rajendra K. Rongong claims that majority of Nepali Christians claim to have come to faith through power encounters or experience of miracles. See Rajendra K. Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal: An Indigenous Movement Till 1990* (Kathmandu: Ekta Books Publications, 2012), 114-115. This is also evident in the testimonies heard in the contemporary churches.

⁴ Scott Cormode, “Advancing Leadership OD778,” (class notes, Day 2, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, August 12-16, 2013) discussions on the book by Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

There are many obstacles that derail pastoral leaders in Nepal, causing them to deviate from healthy processes of discipleship and adaptive change. The following are some of the key challenges.⁵ First, many pastors lack adequate training.⁶ Pastoral formation has been undermined, and theological training is often seen as unnecessary. The preparation of a pastor is often limited to within one local church and cultural context.⁷ Secondly, there is a lack of literacy in Nepal,⁸ even more so in the areas of biblical and pastoral education. There is often fear of attempting higher education in general. As a result, there is a lack of depth and maturity in leadership practices. Thirdly, there is a lack of discernment in young pastors when it comes to biblical and ecclesiastical implications for pastoral leadership. And, finally, there is negligence in submission to Christ, and the church as his body within a covenant community;⁹ so much so, that younger candidates lack motivation to even enter into church leadership.

The need for mentoring is strongly felt among the young pastors of vibrant churches in Nepal. For example, a type of mentoring session was introduced in NRC during a conference in 2017. It was called “Group Mentoring”, and pastors were given

⁵ These reasons were the findings of Dr. Rongong in his study of 16 of the first-generation churches. See Rongong, *Early Churches in Nepal*, 101-102.

⁶ Experience of leading church planting in Nepal for over fifteen years has confirmed that leaders of many younger independent churches, who lack training and maturity in leadership, often came out from older churches due to unmet expectations in the church or organization.

⁷ There are many short-term trainings concentrated in the cities, but these are less than adequate to meet the needs corresponding to the rate of national church growth.

⁸ Nepal claims 63.49% literacy according to World Population Review. See World Population Review, “Nepal Population 2020,” *worldpopulationreview.com*., posted on September 28, 2019, accessed April 5, 2020, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nepal-population/>. However, according to Dr. Ganga Subedi, a development director of International Nepal Fellowship, actual literacy is less than 40%.

⁹ In view of mushrooming churches and general lack of leadership training, there is a growing attitude of anti-submission, and suspicion over leaders in many younger churches.

basic instructions and allowed to share with each other in small groups that included one senior pastor who facilitated. Instantly, the mentoring session became the most popular of the conference. The session was allotted one and half hours, but extended to over two and half; even then, nobody wanted the session to end. It became evident that pastors feel isolated and alone in their ministries, finding nowhere to unload their burdens and grievances. From that point on, group mentoring became an essential practice in every gathering of NRC pastors, anytime, anywhere.

In view of these challenges, and the vision of the Nepali Reformed Church to plant Christ-centered churches throughout the country, this chapter presents a particular approach to addressing these needs by training pastors through mentoring. The goal of this training manual is to provide a foundational framework of spiritual leadership for students of pastoral ministry. The following two sections provide the plan for the implementation and an initial assessment of the proposed manual on Mentoring for Pastoral Formation.¹⁰

Implementation

Pastors, as spiritual leaders, have the responsibility to lead their churches biblically and spiritually within their ministry settings. In order to fulfill this responsibility, the pastoral formation process requires intentional learning and practice in context. The manual on Mentoring for Pastoral Formation is designed for pastors who

¹⁰ The manual is included in full-version in chapter 5.

wish to enter pastoral leadership in Nepali Reformed Churches (NRC).¹¹ The purpose of this manual is to motivate leaders to undertake the practice of intentional mentoring. Particularly, to motivate senior pastors with the wisdom and experience necessary to train younger ones, to make mentoring an essential part of their ministry practices.

Over time, the hope is to make this manual a part of the required training curriculum for pastoral formation in the NRC. There are various training programs where these principles will be taught and practiced. They will initially be presented to small group leaders, elders, deacons, and ministry associates through the Cross-Way Leadership Training Institute (XLTI). The program will be used to train church planters, as continuing education for current pastors, as well as a part of curriculum in formal theological training at Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary (RPS). RPS offers a four-year bachelor's (BTh) and a three-year master's (MDiv) degrees in theology for students training for church and other Christian ministries. The manual is designed to be used in these various ways; although the format of presentation will be modified for each particular setting.

The ultimate goal of this manual is to motivate pastoral candidates through biblical knowledge, and recommended practices that will increase their effectiveness in ministry. The development of action steps for their specific context will also be required. The stated goals of the manuals are: First, to expose Nepali church leaders to the material developed over several years of study on mentoring, thus convincing them of the value of mentorship in the process of pastoral formation. Second, to equip pastors to adopt

¹¹ NRC, as a church planting movement, at the time of writing this manual, have planted thirty-two churches across Nepal. NRC has seventeen ordained pastors and seventeen other leaders planting churches.

mentoring as an integral part of their particular ministry. And finally, to establish concrete action plans for implementing these new processes of spiritual leadership formation in their own churches.¹²

Structure & Method

Training processes within the manual will take place in three different phases. In the first phase, the pastors, elders, and church planting leaders will receive the training in seminar settings to become trainers.¹³ The second phase of training will take place in the Regional Pastoral Fellowship centers appointed by the respective committees. And the third phase of training will take place in the local churches, where pastors will facilitate the manual for church elders, small group leaders and other ministry associates. In each phase, the training will follow a similar format, but the facilitators will be allowed to adjust the method of delivery depending on their context and also make recommendations for future trainings.

A Format of the First Phase of Training

The manual will be used in the following format in the first phase of training, and then be evaluated for future usage. Initially, senior pastors and leaders will go through the training. Pastors of Nepali Reformed Churches from across Nepal will gather for a three-day training at a retreat center, most likely in Kathmandu for convenience sake, because

¹² See Appendix A for explanation about the manual specific action plans.

¹³ The training is intended to be replicated and leaders multiplied along the process so that more pastors and leaders may be reached.

of transportation and availability of resources and facilities. Each training will have approximately twenty to thirty pastors at various levels of training; with the goal of encouraging participants to make action plans for using the manual to train leaders within their regional fellowships and particular churches. Each participant will compose an essential summary of insights gained and make action plans after each lesson.

They will engage the materials through: a) presentation of the principles b) group discussions, reflections and presentations, and c) formation of personal action plans. Every session will be facilitated to encourage discovery, ownership, contemplation, and development of action plans for their own ministry context. Pastors will share concepts and principles in their groups, discuss, evaluate through their experience and, finally, draw practical applications for their particular ministry setting. Each trainee will make SMART action plans along with stated Kingdom goals¹⁴ and plan to report back to the group at future gatherings such as training seminars and annual or semi-annual conferences. Finally, the team of facilitators will brief each evening to ensure the desired qualities and outcomes.

Trainees will return in the fourth month for another phase of training with the same cohort, where they will share experience, give reports of new practices, and share real outcomes. After every phase of training, there will be evaluations to assist in improving both the content and the structure for contextual effectiveness.¹⁵ In this way, a precedent of mentoring for pastoral formation will be set for every level of leadership within the NRC.

¹⁴ See Appendix A for the explanation of action plans and Kingdom goals.

¹⁵ See Appendix C for a sample evaluation form.

Values

In view of the Nepali culture, and the purpose and desired outcomes of the training, it is necessary for us to keep these following basic values in mind. First, God the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of Scripture, and who created the church, is present to preside over the training process. Not only in the learning and practice of these principles, but also through the implementation of the action plans. We will seek to honor his presence and guidance. Second, we will uphold the value that each person taking part is made in the image of God. Each person has unique contributions to make to the discussions and learning activities and will be respected as an invaluable member of the body of Christ. We anticipate that God will act and speak through each of us to one another.

Third, adult learning will take place in a facilitated format. Each individual will learn, together with other adults, with the guidance of a facilitator. At the beginning of the seminar, commitments will be set to honor time, respect the way each individual learns, and to value different spiritual gifts. We will be patient and encourage one another to get a good grasp on the principles in order to properly frame practices in our own context. The focus will be kept on the subject matter at hand as stated by the training manual. We will respect the authority of facilitators and allow them control over the sessions. Asking questions and sharing thoughts and ideas is highly encouraged. However, the group will have the power to decide how much sharing should be allowed in each session. Class presentations will be required, as they help everyone to learn. Finally, everyone will prepare SMART action plans with Kingdom goals to bring their

new understandings into their ministries.¹⁶ We will present and pray over each other's action plans. Sharing experience and reports will be essential to refining plans, and will also serve in keeping each other accountable. This will be done quarterly and annually within appointed groups.

Assessment

The training manual, "Mentoring for Pastoral Formation", was tested with two different groups of pastors. The first time was with pastors of NRC churches during an annual conference. The conference was held over six days, when all the pastors and church planters gathered at a retreat center in October of 2019. The first two days of the conference were filled with testimonies, ministry reports, worship, prayer, learning, and physical activities. The third day was a quiet retreat with worship and meditation followed by a day of hiking over green mountains along the river. The fourth day was set apart for polity revision and business proceedings of NRC, followed by a communion service illustrating the Body of Christ as our ministry model. All of these activities prepared suitable atmosphere for the final two days, which were committed to studying the manual on "Mentoring for Pastoral Formation".¹⁷

Over thirty NRC pastors and leaders participated in the first phase of the training. Three senior pastors of Cross-Way Church in Kathmandu, including myself, facilitated

¹⁶ See Appendix A for the explanation of action plans and Kingdom goals.

¹⁷ The manual is included in full-version in chapter 5.

various training sessions.¹⁸ These three pastors translated part of the material into Nepali, orally summarized it for the participants, prepared PowerPoint outlines with key headings, and determined the most effective mode of delivery for each session. They led discussions in small groups and answered questions. But, more importantly, the facilitators helped to interpret the principles into the Nepali church context as they carefully listened to the input they received on the concepts presented, and received feedback on their mode of delivery. For example, one facilitator translated the case study of the manual into Nepali and led a discussion on how the lack of mentoring in Nepali churches and our training institutions has resulted in the demise of many pastors.¹⁹ Groups then discussed how leaders frequently feel underequipped and alone, striving amidst seemingly insurmountable struggles; as a result, some even leave the ministry. This was the most appreciated part of the two-days training.

The second phase of the assessment was done with a group of twelve faculty members of the Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary in December of 2019. Each faculty member present serves in leadership roles in their local church at various capacities, and five are pastors in churches around Kathmandu. The faculty could only give two half days for the training due to their responsibilities at the end of the semester. Unfortunately, I was the sole facilitator for the two-day training through the manual. But, given the setting of a small group of teachers already familiar with each other, it was manageable. On the first day, the training was held inside a large class room, and the second day,

¹⁸ Cross-Way Church is located in Kathmandu and is the largest church in NRC, with the vision and resources to drive the church movement. Due to its location and available resources, pastors at Cross-Way are more equipped for teaching and training other pastors than pastors in rural Nepal.

¹⁹ See the case study at the end of the Lesson One in the manual, “Mentoring for Pastoral Formation” in Chapter 5.

inside the faculty lounge. Even though everyone felt the pace was rushed because of limited time, overall, the training was well received and effective. On the final day of both the trainings, the evaluations were received back, verbally as well as through the written forms.²⁰

The evaluation of the training confirmed the urgency of the need of mentoring for Nepali pastors. Here are some of the repeated comments received back from the participants after the training: “This is a necessary subject matter for Nepali pastors as mentoring is not effectively practiced in Nepal”. The trainees confirmed that “the training manual and its contents were overall very good”. The highest score in the feedback was given for the Facilitators, stating they were excellent. The participants found the case study at the end of first lesson to be the most helpful aspect of the manual, because it helped illustrate the necessity of mentoring in the Nepali context. It promoted dynamic discussions, as everyone could relate to the case under scrutiny. Another enlivening session was the debate organized on the motion, “existing seminary education is adequate for pastoral formation”. It unearthed various opinions about the effectiveness of existing seminary education. Assessments also revealed that the setting of the training is another important factor to consider. Participants mentioned that the retreat center, in the context of NRC’s annual conference, was an especially suitable space for the training.

The following are the constructive remarks given as suggestions for improving the mentoring training: First, the majority of participants from both trainings said, “We need more time”. The time allotted was too short since these were completely new concepts to the participants. Perhaps adding another day would have been beneficial. The

²⁰ See Appendix C for written evaluation form used.

seminary faculty suggested that a longer time during the holidays may have created a more appropriate time frame. As the content was heavy, many felt that the facilitators moved along too fast through the manual. It would have been better to go through the material at a slower pace, with more time to digest and discuss the content and its implications. Some even requested, if possible, to present the material through outlines on the PowerPoints. Evidently, people like to see and take handwritten notes that enhances learning.

Other constructive suggestions were given to improve the manuals. The pastors and leaders suggested that the training manual be made in a workbook format that would better suit the learning atmosphere. Everyone agreed on the necessity of translating the whole manual into the Nepali language, complete with more sensitivity to the context. The language and format may overwhelm many Nepali pastors, many of whom do not have theological training in their background. It was recommended that each chapter be further developed with additional examples and case studies to make it even more contextually appropriate for pastors.

As per the setting of the training, the seminary office and the classroom on the first day were not very suitable spaces for engaging the subject matter. The atmosphere of the training location could be improved. The faculty of RPS asked that the training be incorporated into the seminary's curriculum, as it addresses the heart of the seminary's vision to equip pastors for Nepali churches. The academic dean even asked, "Can you run a two-day seminar for our senior students in January?" There is currently a mentoring program at the seminary being practiced by teachers and students. But, since it is in an

institution and assigned as part of the curriculum, it often feels technical and imposed. Honing mentoring skills require the dynamics of relationships within life experiences; only so much can be achieved within an institutional context.

The two trial runs of the training manual were especially helpful in gaining insight into the effectiveness of the content and its structure. Trainees in both settings were attentive and engaged, and the subject matter was interesting and challenging to both groups. Trainees were fascinated by the discussions on the practice of mentoring, yet amazed at the lack of conscious efforts invested in mentoring for pastoral formation in Nepal up to this point. As a result, they were convinced of the urgent need for its implementation. Action plans provided tangible ways to help pastors and leaders practice mentoring in their ministry settings. Eighteen pastors and leaders from NRC made written action plans to mentor at least three potential leaders in their own church or ministry setting. They committed to report back in six months' time at the bi-annual regional conference of the NRC. Due to the shortage of time, seminary faculty were not able to work on their action plans, but they committed to incorporating this into the next phase of the training.

Assessment of Outcomes

There was one full session on Group Mentoring during the conference where each Cross-Way pastor and leader was allocated a group of leaders from various daughter churches. Some of the pastors from rural places had never before been given the opportunity to speak and talk in such manner, far less observe the practice of mentoring.

They cherished the group mentoring session more than anything else we did at the conference. It touched their souls. There is a deep hunger in people for personal and relational speaking, listening and sharing.

One teacher at the seminary said, “This has come to us so late in time, wish we had this opportunity when we were in seminary.” He was speaking of the unfulfilled longings of a generation of Nepali pastors; alluding to the absence of personal mentoring as a part of this generations’ pastoral formation. Another pastor friend reported his experience of the two-hour group mentoring session at the church conference, “The two hours of sharing and crying together was the best part of those six days. People are healed through this kind of sharing. There was not a dry eye in the place”. One poignantly confessed, “We will commit to mentoring in our churches. No wonder we have such hard time finding church planters, it’s because we don’t share like this from our hearts” and others nodded their heads in agreement. Before the training ended with action plans, one of the pastors said, “Next time let’s spend a longer time doing this; we’ve only scratched the surface. We can tell there’s so much depth of meaning in this way of ministry.”

Some of the action plans that were turned in from the NRC leaders training spoke of their commitment to carry this mentoring ministry forward. One young female seminary graduate, serving a new church in a remote village wrote, “I will meet with [name taken out] the senior guardian of the fellowship, in whose home the church meets, on November 20 for spiritual discipleship and tell him about mentoring that I have learned and make plans to meet every fifteen days.” An older pastor, who has been leading a church for over thirty years, said, “I will meet with three committed young men, [with their names], at church on November 20, and tell them what I have learned about

mentoring. I will listen to their concerns and make plans for further sessions with them for mentoring.” One pastor, the secretary for the NRC mission head office said, “I will mentor three persons [names, from the home church] on December 6, at 11am. In the first meeting, we will discuss how they are understanding mentoring in their context and discuss ways we can do that. We will study together about what is mentoring, and help define it for them from what I have learned here.”

Another young seminary graduate who is planting a church in the Western district of Dang wrote: “In the next six months, I will select three persons from our church, and teach them to begin leadership work in the church. I will mentor them. And I will help them to find their spiritual gifts and supply resources to encourage them to take some leadership roles in the church.” He continued, “I will meet with [the named mentees] once a week on Fridays, and do the following- regular visitations they are making with church members, pray together, encourage them, and listen to their issues and grievances in life”. These initial commitments about mentoring were encouraging; not only to see the leaders’ desire, but more so their understanding of what it means to initiate such a ministry in their local churches.

Conclusion

Personally, I have been encouraged by the receptivity of the pastors and candidates going into ministry. I will incorporate their recommendations as I restructure the training programs.²¹ The duration of a training should not be less than two and a half

²¹ Some of the recommendations, such as three-days of training, are already incorporated in the manual in the next chapter.

to three days. The manuals will both be translated into Nepali and also made more culturally sensitive. I hope to have wider input from pastors associated with the seminary to contribute to the discussion and reflections. This will help solidify mentorship as an integral practice in the life of each pastor.

The implementation and assessment of the manual on Mentoring for Pastoral Formation, proposed in this project, has confirmed the value and urgency of the training needed for spiritual leadership in Nepali churches. Among young pastors, there is an evident desire for improved ways of church leadership. There is also a felt need for contextually sensitive material that is both critically examined and theologically sound. The secret to better pastoral leadership lies in the amount of time and effort invested in laying solid theological foundations on spiritual ground, as well as in the dynamics of relationships through mentoring. Towards that end, this manual will be useful in meeting the real needs of the Nepali churches, thus offering hope to the future leaders.

CHAPTER 5

TRAINING MANUAL ON MENTORING FOR PASTORAL FORMATION IN NEPAL

Theme: Effective mentoring will prepare spiritually mature pastoral leaders for Nepali churches.

Goal: Each pastor taking the training will commit to mentoring at least two next-generation leaders for their churches.

Structure: Pastors of Nepali Reformed Churches (NRC) from across Nepal will gather for a three-day training at a suitable regional center. Each training will bring approximately twenty-five pastors from three different regions.

Schedule and Plan for 3-Day Training

Day 1.	3-4 pm	Arrival, Registration, Refresh and Fellowship
	4-5	Welcome and Worship
	5:30-6:30	Lesson One. Introduction-Orientation and Design of the Manual
	6:30	Dinner
	7:30-8:30	Group Work: A Case Study: Mentoring for Pastoral Leaders in Nepal
	9	Bedtime
Day 2.	6-7 am	Devotions: <i>Lectio Divina</i> on a selected passage
	7-8	Breakfast
	8-8:30	Worship: (appointed pastors will lead worship session)
	8:30-9:30	Lesson Two. Mentoring in Nepal
	9:30-10	Group Discussion & Action plans
	10-10:30	Tea Break
	10:30-12	Lesson Three. Biblical Study on Mentoring
	12-1:30 pm	Lunch
	1:30-3	Group Discussion: Presentation of the Bible Study & Action Plans
	3-5	Group Outdoor Activities
	5-6:30	Lesson Four. Essential Qualities & Skills for Mentoring in Nepal
	6-6:30	Group Discussion & Action Plans
	6:30-7:30	Dinner
	8	Bedtime
Day 3.	6-7 am	Devotions: <i>Lectio Divina</i> on a selected passage
	7-8	Breakfast
	8-8:30	Worship
	8:30-10	Lesson Five: Process of Mentoring
	10-10:30	Tea Break
	10:30-11.30	Group Discussion & Action plans
	11:30-12.30	Lesson Six. Conclusion, Appendices, and 3-6 Month Action plans
	12.30-2	Lunch & Rest
	2-3	Closing: Worship & Prayer with the Lord's Supper.
	3 pm	Departure

Lesson One

Introduction: Orientation and Design of the Manual

Goal: Each candidate will understand the why, what, who, and how of the training.

Assessment of the Need

Mentoring of pastors has not been a forté of the Nepali church. Almost all readiness for leadership in ministry takes place within a church, after some level of teaching and skill training. In general, though, pastoral formation in Nepal happens in this way: a trusted guardian, usually a church elder or leader, takes full responsibility to pick out and appoint a candidate. The candidate then follows the leader around to learn the ropes and carve out a leadership training course. Over the last several decades, “sponsors” have taken the responsibility for training pastors and leaders for their church or mission project, but only within their own church or training centers.¹ This trend has served in part to meet the immediate needs of the church, but it has not set a healthy precedent for the long haul. While it appears to supply local churches with needed leaders, this process has stifled interest in broader theological education. It has quenched curiosity beyond local interests and diminished aspirations of learning from the historical and worldwide church. With that trend in mind, this manual is an effort to address the needs of mentoring for pastoral leadership in Nepali churches.

This manual will address current leadership challenges and needs for pastoral formation in Nepali churches, some of which have surfaced due to the following reasons:

¹ Sponsors are special guardians who pledge to supply, either verbally or in written form, what is needed to train an individual for a particular ministry field agreed upon. This is peculiar in Nepal with missionaries needing compatriots in their work who need basic training.

- Many pastors lack adequate training.² Pastoral formation process has been undermined, and theological training is often seen as unnecessary, particularly in the independent churches mushrooming in Nepal.
- Inadequacy of traditional approaches to train pastors, even where training is present. The preparation of a pastor is often limited within a local church and its cultural context.³
- Lack of literacy in general,⁴ but even more so on the subject of biblical and pastoral education. Therefore, there is a general lack of depth and maturity in leadership practices.
- Lack of discernment in young pastors when it comes to biblical and ecclesiastical implications for pastoral leadership.
- Negligence in submission to Christ and the church as his body within a covenant community,⁵ so much so, that younger candidates lack motivation to enter into church leadership.

² Experience of leading church planting in Nepal for over fifteen years has confirmed that leaders of many young, independent churches come out of older churches due to unmet expectations in the church or organizations. They generally lack training and maturity in leadership.

³ There are many short-term trainings primarily concentrated in the cities, but they are less than adequate to meet the needs for the national church growth ratio.

⁴ Nepal claims 63.49% literacy according to World Population Review. See World Population Review, “Nepal Population 2020,” *worldpopulationreview.com.*, posted on September 28, 2019, accessed April 5, 2020, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/nepal-population/>. However, according to Dr. Ganga Subedi, a development director of International Nepal Fellowship, actual literacy is less than 40%.

⁵ In view of mushrooming churches and general lack of leadership trainings, there’s a growing attitude of anti-submission and suspicion of leaders in many younger churches.

Training Goals

The value of mentoring is the value of human relationships - relationships that guide towards both persons flourishing. This manual will examine the cultural context of Nepal pertaining to mentoring. It will analyze the contours of a young and vibrant church that is struggling to be healthy in its leadership paradigm, yet is growing on every front and is otherwise effective in ministry. Pastors, as spiritual leaders, have the responsibility to raise up the next generation of leaders for their churches, and while doing so, address the inadequacies of the past that hindered leadership development. They have a responsibility to lead biblically and spiritually. For this, mentoring must become the backbone for pastoral formation.

This manual is designed for pastors who wish to enter pastoral leadership in Nepali Reformed Churches (NRC). It hopes to motivate leaders to undertake intentional mentoring of others. And, moreover, to motivate senior pastors, who have wisdom and experience, to consider mentoring others for the purpose of ministry preparation, making this an essential part of their own ministry. Over time, the hope is to make mentoring a required curriculum in NRC. The overall goal of this training is to motivate pastoral candidates through knowledge training, and to provide an effective procedure for mentoring ministry; leading to the development of sustainable action plans for mentoring in their respective contexts. The stated goals of these training are:

- To engage pastors and church leaders with the mentoring concepts, so that they understand their value in the pastoral formation process.
- To help them adopt mentoring as an integral part of their own ministry in context.

- To urge pastors to make concrete action plans for implementing the new ways of spiritual leadership discussed throughout the manual, in their own churches.

Manual Design

Although the content of this manual can be beneficial for any Christian leader, it is primarily written for pastors who wish to serve a local church as a leader. Initially, this manual is intended for pastors of Nepali Reformed Church (NRC) movement.⁶ There will be various training programs, at different levels, where mentoring will be taught. These trainings will include small group leaders, elders, deacons, other ministry associates and Cross-Way Leadership Training Institute (XLTi) for church planters (continuing education for pastors). The content will also be developed into a formal curriculum for Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary (RPS), as a part of our four-year bachelor's degree programs. The manual is designed to be used at all these levels with adjustments in facilitation according to context-dynamics. The manual will be used in the following format in the first phase of the training, then evaluated for future usage.

- Pastors of Nepali Reformed Churches from across Nepal will gather for a three-day training at a regional retreat center. Each training will gather approximately twenty to twenty-five pastors, at three different regions of the country.
- The manual takes the approach of adult learning through a) presentation of the principles; b) group reflections, discussions, and presentations; and c) SMART action

⁶ At the writing of this manual, NRC has planted over thirty-two churches across Nepal, where there are seventeen pastors and other seventeen leaders planting churches.

plans. Every session will be facilitated to encourage discovery, ownership, contemplated practices, and development of action plans.

- Pastors will share concepts and principles in groups, and then discuss and draw out applications for their ministry settings. Peer-learning will be encouraged as much as possible.
- Each will write down an essential summary of insights gained and make action plans after each lesson.
- Method of Training:
 - The training is designed to motivate a mentored way of ministry. The training will take place in a retreat setting where, not only is the content valued, but it will also be a place where God's Spirit is invited to effectively speak into the lives of the leaders and candidates.
 - Initially, senior pastors and leaders will complete the training. They will then take the manual to train leaders within their own churches.
 - Each trainee will make SMART action plans along with stated kingdom goals to be followed up on in the following three to six months.⁷
 - Trainees will return in the fourth month for a subsequent phase of training when they will share their experience, give reports of new practices, disclose real outcomes of their efforts, and worship and pray together.
 - In this way, training will continue at every level of the church's leadership formation process.

⁷ See Appendix A for the explanation of action plans and kingdom goals.

Values to Uphold

The training will uphold these basic values:

- God the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of Scripture, and who created the church, is present to preside over the training process; in the learning and practicing of the principles, but also through the development and execution of action plans. We will seek to honor his presence and guidance.
- Each person taking part is made in the image of God. Each person has unique contributions to make to the discussions and learning activities and will be respected as an invaluable member of the body of Christ. We anticipate that God will act and speak through each of us to one another.
- An adult learning approach will be applied in each session. Each individual will learn with other adults and with the help of facilitators.
- At the beginning of the seminar, commitments will be made to honor time, respect the way each individual learns and to value different spiritual gifts. We will be patient, and encourage each other to get a good grasp of the principles in order to frame their practices in context.
- The focus will be kept on the topic/subject matter at hand as stated by the training manual. We will respect the authority of the facilitators and allow them control over the sessions.
- Asking questions and sharing thoughts and ideas will be highly encouraged, however, the group will have the power to decide how much sharing should be allowed in each session. Class presentations will be required as they help everyone to retain what they are learning.

- Everyone will prepare SMART action plans with kingdom goals to implement what they have learned into their ministries. Each member will present and pray over their action plans.
- Sharing experience and reports will be highly encouraged to exchange ideas, refine plans and also serve to keep accountability. This will be done quarterly and annually within the appointed groups.

Exercise: Write out your personal goal for this training over the next three-days.

What do you find especially meaningful in this lesson, so far? Share it with a friend.

Sign the “Covenant Agreement” to enroll in the mentoring program. (see Appendix A)

A Case Study: The Need for Mentoring Pastoral Leaders in Nepal⁸

Ram Bahadur was appointed to lead a two-year-old church in Deurali, in the Eastern part of Nepal. Bahadur had grown up in a charismatic church in his village in Central Nepal. In this church, he had learned everything he knew about church and ministry by watching his pastors and elders; but only from a distance. He was interested in ministry but was not fully convinced that this career would suit him and meet his needs. He hesitantly entered a Bible college in Kathmandu and enjoyed student life, full of frequent activities and disciplines. But academics came hard for him, because English was not his primary language. However, teachers were gracious. Their main goal was helping students get ready for ministry, so they helped Bahadur advance by graciously

⁸ The case study is a true story with changed names and places to conceal identity.

giving him passing grades. He graduated after four years of study in Bachelors in Theology program.

After graduation, Bahadur took an internship position at the new church plant in Deurali. New believers in the church were gracious with Bahadur as he learned the course of ministry. They were also young in matters of faith and practice, as they attended this newly forming church in their village. Bahadur would visit homes. He would lead Bible studies and pray with the other believers. He would do evangelism, but reluctantly. Many of those who wanted to become Christians were from poorer and marginalized backgrounds and had multi-layered family and community problems. Bahadur was not sure how he would lead them if they believed in Jesus and started coming to church. He himself was not sure if he would spend more than a year in Deurali. The believers eventually recognized this uncertainty. They questioned the future of the church, in the case that Bahadur left the village. So, Bahadur kept a distance in his relationships with others; and believers also guarded their commitments because they were not sure if the church would continue after he left.

The church in Kathmandu, which commissioned Bahadur to lead this young church, provided fellowship and accountability in the form of four meetings per year, along with two conferences. That is all they could afford due to the distance and cost involved in these activities. Although there was a phone conversation with another leader every month, Bahadur felt alone and unprepared for this ministry. It had been entrusted to him at a young age and his training had been limited. He was concerned that the church was not growing, yet felt that he had to send positive reports to Kathmandu. He thought that positive reports were important, even if giving them required some embellishment;

after all, people did visit the church once in a while. Many, in fact, did like the church programs. It was baptism which they were not ready to commit to, due to fear of their family and community, who had threatened to isolate them and make their life miserable if they took this step.

After seeing a lack of fruit in Deurali, with not a single baptism in one year, Bahadur was asked to lead another more established church in the central part of Nepal. He received training, and committed to lead this church. There, Bahadur had closer accountability with other leaders in the region. Unfortunately, his ministry habits had been set in Deurali. His routine activities and postures were not fruitful in his ministry to new believers. Bahadur eventually lacked the motivation to continue leading this church, even though he was unsure what else he would do for a job, since his training was in pastoral ministry. He felt stuck, and eventually, the leaders overseeing him felt the need to recommend that he consider a different career. The following year, Bahadur left church ministry altogether.

Discussion: Discuss the case of Ram Bahadur in your groups. What happened in the training process? Was it adequate for Ram? How would you suggest preparing candidates like Bahadur for careers in pastoral ministry in Nepal?

Action plans: Make an action plan to execute in the next three months. Where you will find a time and place to A) gather trusted leaders in your church and discuss how mentoring is and/or is not happening there. B) Share the value of mentoring for your church and brainstorm ideas of how it might look there.

Lesson Two

Mentoring in Nepal

Goal: Each trainee will understand the meaning of mentoring and explore its implications in the churches of Nepal.

Mentoring is an untapped resource when it comes to pastoral formation in Nepal. Pastors are prepared for ministry in many different ways, but mentoring has been neglected. In mentoring, a person lives alongside and learns from others. This deliberate living and intentional learning can provide new pastors with a wealth of wisdom from which they can lead others. Spiritual leaders, particularly pastors, have the responsibility to help people realize their true selves. It is pastors who help others understand who they are in God, and how to live out of that identity in a network of relationships. Brian Williams argues that we have handed these important responsibilities over to institutions, expecting them to do the job for us.⁹ It is no wonder that many modern churches are facing challenges beyond what our textbooks can solve. Pastoral ministry, though, can handle relationships that techniques are unable to solve.

Studying through biblical patterns and observing historical trends in the formation of spiritual leaders, we find that pastoral formation happens best through the process of mentoring. We also find that the pastoral vocation is as much an internal journey as it is an external process. The formation is life-long. While visible gifts such as teaching, preaching, and public service are essential; formation is fundamentally about character

⁹ Brian A. Williams argues that in the recent past, institutions have been entrusted with preparing pastors for ministry, but have failed to do so effectively. Brian A. William, *The Potter's Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 53-63.

and calling. One must be conscious of one's own soul at work as much as ministry is at work. Visible and external qualities can be easily manipulated, but the assessment of the soul takes contemplation and introspection. A mentor plays an important role in this process; holding up a mirror, per se, and helping the mentee see their real self.

Mentoring Defined

Mentoring is an organic, yet intentional, way of living and sharing which outflows into the dynamics of a relationship. Such a relationship creates space for character formation, which in essence, bears fruit in ministry. Dallas Willard contends that the mission of mentoring is “to form the whole person so that the nature of Christ becomes the natural expression of our souls, bodies, and spirits throughout our daily lives.”¹⁰ For mentoring to take place, one must be genuinely invested in a relationship. Christian mentoring is based on the primary foundation of God as instigator and Scripture as the fundamental base. Any other foundation for mentoring relationships will distract a person from not only pastoral formation, but their true nature and humanity.

Keith Anderson and Randy Reese define spiritual mentoring as unique relationships where one helps another to grow in their faith. They claim that spiritual mentoring is “incarnational” and “autobiographical” within the context of real life with all its real issues.¹¹ According to Tom Schwanda, “Mentoring is coming alongside an individual or group of individuals to learn a skill, develop an ability or deepen some

¹⁰ James M. Huston, introduction to *The Mentored Life: From Individualism to Personhood*, by Dallas Willard (Vancouver: Regent College 2011), 12.

¹¹ Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 37.

experience of life.”¹² Biblical mentoring is narrowed in focus in order to guide the person(s) in their relationships to the Triune God and others. Walter Wright says, “Mentoring is a dance of teaching and learning together.” He defines mentoring as an “intentional, exclusive, intensive, voluntary relationships between two persons, usually with the intent to grow and develop one of the persons toward an agreed-upon goal or objective.”¹³

The church is called to disciple people in Christ. Mentoring is conscious and continuous discipleship. Those who faithfully seek to follow Christ over the course of their life’s journey, who have kept and refined their faith, are responsible to steward this faith and pass it on to others. The wisdom and insight from their experience has matured with age, and they are to be honored as they entrust what they have learned to new leaders. Mentoring a leader over time, according to Terry Walling, requires coaching. He says, “Coaching is a relational experience in which one person facilitates an individual or group to discover their God-given potential.”¹⁴ It is about “facilitating discovery” rather than “delivery of content.”¹⁵ Further, he testifies, “I became convinced that coaching and facilitating *discovery* is a core skill in helping catalyze change and fostering the deep level of breakthrough that every leader needs.”¹⁶ Proper mentoring and coaching assists

¹² Tom Schwanda, “Mentoring as Spiritual Leadership Course - SP 767” (class notes at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, June 26-30, 2017).

¹³ Walter C. Wright *Mentoring: The Promises of a Relational Leadership* (Secunderabad, India: OM Books, 2004), 29-30.

¹⁴ Terry B. Walling, *Idea Coaching Pathway: Coaching the Person Instead of Just the Problem!* (California: Leader Breakthru, 2015), 67.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 22.

life-long renewal, where learned and refined life-skills will ensure fuller life in Christ while building the body of Christ. Walling claims that finishing well in life includes making a commitment to mentor and to be mentored.¹⁷

Nepal, with its rich cultural heritage, has some history of apprenticeship in raising leaders. Churches have not tended to look favorably upon the culture or traditions, though, since the culture has been heavily shaped by Hindu religious practices. As a result, the young and rapidly growing church is facing leadership challenges that they are not prepared for. They have yet to discover a sustainable way to develop and keep well-trained leaders in ministry. Moreover, Nepal, as a sub-literate nation, runs largely along oral tradition.¹⁸ This presents some difficulty in shaping a curriculum-based mentoring program. However, a plan that is thoughtful, biblical and contextually appropriate can ensure the quality leadership development that is desperately needed in this season of church growth.

Discussion Question: In a few sentences, how would you define mentoring for Nepali Churches?

Debate this proposition: “Theological educational institutions have failed to produce pastoral leaders for churches in Nepal”

¹⁷ Terry B. Walling. *Stuck! Navigating the Transitions of Life and Leadership* (Bloomington, MN: ChurchSmart Resources, 2008), 89-90.

¹⁸ Even though national stats claim adult literacy to be 67.9%, in reality over 40% are basic and functionally literate. See “Nepal Adult Literacy Rate, 1960-2019,” *koema.com.*, posted on 2018, accessed January 28, 2020, https://knoema.com/atlas/Nepal/topics/Education/Literacy/Adult-literacy-rate_

Action plans: In the next three to six months, make action plans to impart this understanding of mentoring to a potential leader in your church, whom you will mentor. With whom, how and when will you share these insights in your church? How will you guide them along the mentoring process?

Lesson Three

The Bible on Mentoring

Goal: To learn how Scripture addresses mentoring, and therefore, be convicted about undertaking this crucial ministry in the life of the church.

Christian mentoring is based on the foundation that God is its author and Scripture is the absolute guide. Any other foundation can distract from shepherding as leadership, and create false motivations for mentoring. In the young churches of Nepal, leaders struggle to navigate through cultural issues because the culture is inseparably connected with Hinduism. Since the majority of textbooks on the Bible and theology come from the Western World, contextualization becomes not only intriguing, but an essential project. Cultural applications and implications are not always clear. In a heavily oral culture, traditional ways often trump creative or new ideas. Therefore, a sound biblical education is necessary; not only for pastoral formation, but also for mentoring.

According to the Bible, the Triune God – the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit - live in perfect relationship with a perfect balance of love, respect and submission. God created human beings in his own image. In creation, relationships were good and beautiful in all aspects. As human beings made in God's image, the Trinity becomes a

model we strive to imitate in human relationships. Throughout the Bible, God functions as a covenant partner and a teacher. He speaks the truth and works truth out into reality. He sends prophets, instructs his people, and desires willing obedience in response. He loves, cares, and keeps his people accountable, in step with his holiness. He judges everything on the basis of his character and Word.

We also find Jesus himself mentoring his disciples. Throughout his public ministry, he lived and taught with his disciples both in sight and in mind the majority of the time. At the end of his ministry, Jesus said to his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (Jn 20:21). He knew they would assume the vocation of the Kingdom following his ascension. In this way, Jesus mentored them for the mission through spiritual and character formation.

Mentoring parallels discipleship. Discipleship to Jesus is the underlying goal of mentoring. The goal is that each person involved grows in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Jesus said to his disciples, “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” (Jn 15:4). Paul says the end of discipleship is “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). The success of the apostolic mission to plant and grow Christ-centered churches must be credited to the mentoring the disciples received from Jesus Christ; and then to their unrelenting pursuit of discipling others.

Exercise: Study the following texts in small groups and discuss: What essential *characteristics* and *postures*, for the mentoring relationship, (in mentors and mentees) can we glean from these passages?

Moses and Joshua: Numbers 27:12-23

Elijah and Elisha: 1 Kings 19:15-21

Jesus and the Apostles: Matthew 9:35-10:15 / John 21:1-20

Paul and Timothy: 2 Timothy 2:1-10.

Biblical Principles for Mentoring

Mentoring must have willing commitment and delight. We learn the way of God's covenant relationship through Jesus Christ who, as the very Son of God, embodied God's covenant and mission in our world. Jesus was a rabbi, a priest, a prophet and the king. But in the execution of all these roles, he took the approach of a mentor. He came alongside his disciples and walked with them at all levels—teaching, coaching, working, caring and shepherding. He empowered, without imposing self-interest, in order to form them for the vocation they would soon be undertaking. Jesus approached mentorship by challenging his disciples to know themselves in right relationship with God and then helped them understand their calling and goals in life.¹⁹ The first goal was to know God fully and serve his purpose. There are two essential elements in such a mentoring

¹⁹ The disciples observed that Jesus often retreated alone to pray and be with God. At crucial turns in his ministry, God declared Jesus “beloved” (Mt 3:17, 17:5), which was the foundation of his self-identity.

relationship: a. Commitment to the covenant relationship, and b. Willing obedience that brings mutual delight.

Mentoring must be done in the context of covenant community: Leadership for pastoral formation takes place within the context of the covenant community. All Scripture deals with the nature of God and the peculiar ways he desired to relate to his people; the patriarchs, Israel, the apostles, and the church. They were all called to live in a particular kind of relationship with God and with each other. God is holy and must be revered as such. In all his power and self-revelation, his nature has been revealed so that people may know him as Father, Jesus the Christ, and Holy Spirit. This Triune God wants an intimate and personal relationship with us.

Jesus' interactions with his apostles followed a model of mentoring very similar to God's relationship with the patriarchs. In fact, the covenant was at the heart of the mentoring relationship both in terms of the biblical covenant and in Jesus' dealings with humans. The goal of mentoring for pastoral formation is God-glorifying and human flourishing. In the covenant style, God dealt with the patriarchs. They, in turn, dealt with others who would take up their roles of leadership.

Joshua learned everything about leading the people of God through the interactions he saw taking place between God and Moses. Joshua was mentored by Moses patiently and critically over many years of living in close proximity. He was then ready to take on the mission of conquering the Promised Land, because he knew what it entailed and what was at stake. Jesus lived alongside his disciples, at all levels, to allow them to see and experience the mission of the kingdom of God. In his life with the

disciples, he embraced a posture of humility and authenticity which attracted them into Kingdom-learning.²⁰ Mentors lead their mentees within a life lived in the close proximity of relationship.

The Holy Spirit is in charge in mentoring: Mentoring is not only patterned after the life, death and resurrection of Christ, it is also patterned after the work of the Holy Spirit, who is called the *Paraclete*, or Counselor. Anderson and Reese, speaking about spiritual mentoring, say, “Wisdom is God’s Holy Spirit creating a partnered relationship in the work of spiritual formation. ...then the work of the mentor is not to create but to notice, not to invent but to discern.”²¹ The Holy Spirit’s role is to come alongside, and in doing so, he is in the vocation of mentoring ministry. “Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, mentors play host to mentees and help them discern those obstacles that slow or inhibit their formation as persons in Christ and as pastors for Christ.”²² Mentors work in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Group Discussion: The practice of the Lord’s Table helps to visibly and substantially remind God’s covenant people about his presence and faithfulness in the life of discipleship. Study together 1 Cor. 11:17-34 and discuss the question: How does the practice of the Lord’s Supper (taking part in eating, sharing, praying, praising and

²⁰ Edward L. Smither, *Augustine as Mentor: A Model for preparing Spiritual Leaders* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 16.

²¹ Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 44.

²² Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 91.

expressing the presence and goodness of Christ) signify and embody the understanding of mentoring relationships within a covenant Body of Christ?

Lesson Four

Essential Qualities and Skills for Mentoring in Nepal

Goal: The trainees will be able to discern the foundational characteristics and skill sets required for a person to enroll in the mentoring program.

As noted above, pastoral formation is a life-long process. While visible gifts such as teaching, preaching, and public service are essential; formation is fundamentally about character and calling. There is a whole lot more that goes into pastoral formation than the cognitive exercise of the academic enterprise. Mentoring requires collective wisdom from a community. On the mentor's part, mentoring requires wisdom extracted from living within a context and culture over time. While theological training is necessary, healthy habits and rhythms need to be embedded for healthy pastoral formation. Mentors help guide this direction and rhythm in a mentee. This also means that mentors need to redeem cultural means of leadership formation already present in the context. In view of this, the following are foundational tools necessary for the mentoring of pastors and leaders in Nepal.

Moral and Spiritual Character of Pastoral Candidates: The foundational qualities to be sought in a pastoral candidate should be a moral and spiritual character that matches with Scripture. Just as a house needs a foundation, the initial phase of formation

concentrates on the moral and spiritual character of authentic discipleship. Just like a metal object, which over time and under pressure will reveal its true colors, candidates must be tested over various seasons of life in order to discern the deeper qualities of moral and spiritual character. An absolute litmus test must be that integrity and grace appear coherently and consistently in life. The reality of humility and teachability must surface consistently. Puritan pastor Richard Baxter, speaking about spiritual character writes, “I confess that a man shall never have my consent to have the charge of other men’s souls and to oversee them in order to their salvation that takes no heed to himself but is careless of his own.”²³ Their moral and spiritual character must be held to a high standard, not unrealistic, but imitable to others on the journey. Mentoring for pastoral formation is next to impossible without such character in place. Candidates must be tested and approved early on in the journey.

Training in Academics and Vocational Skills for Shepherding: Along with the pattern set by Jesus through the life he shared with his disciples, the teaching and practice of ministry must go hand in hand with academic training in pastoral formation. Minds and hearts must both be fully invested in training that sets precedence for a life in ministry. Academic training, in the right proportion to the general intellectual level of the people in the ministry context, must be required of a pastor who will be asked to shepherd them.²⁴

²³ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Freetown, MA: Sugarhouse Press, 2014), 40.

²⁴ Education is a status symbol in Nepal. Many seek it more for certificates that will access social and corporal hierarchy. Education level of a pastor should suit the people that he/she will serve. We find many pastors frustrated with serving people in the village following their theological education in the city. Many are unwilling to go back to their own church or people.

Often disproportionate academic requirements set by church authorities have not helped ministers to care for their flock effectively. Pastors in Nepal are often expected to wear a status that comes with education and training. This has harmed churches by creating an intellectual gap between pastor-leaders and local elders and believers. Intellectual growth should be proportionate to the process of formation within the community they serve. Pastoral work is a craft that takes time and practice. It is a craft that becomes better with experience within a community. Pastors need to be the ‘resident theologians’ who cultivate and practice theologically discerned ministries within their churches.²⁵ During the mentoring period, motivation comes from close accountability for guided learning and reflection.

Exercise: Give some practical suggestion to the academic dean of a local seminary for how to better train our pastors. How can churches come alongside educational institutions to help mentor in the pastoral formation process?

Listening Skills in Mentoring: Mentoring takes place along relational lines.

Relationships are built upon communication lines. An essential part of communication is listening - perhaps more so than speaking. This is possibly the most crucial skill for a mentor in regard to pastoral formation. A mentor needs to be an expert in dealing with human relationships as they encourage their mentee towards spiritual and all-around well-being. For this, listening is absolutely foundational. But this same skill is equally

²⁵ This is the contention of Williams in Chapter 6, “Four Areas of Pastoral Formation Reconsidered.” see Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 174.

required of a mentee. Self-respect comes from being known, understood, accepted and confirmed.²⁶ Pastoral formation deals with the development of a balanced person. No one is more concerned about feeding our hearts and sustaining the healthy soul in us than God himself. We serve a God who listens. He is a God who speaks, and his speech-act is his primary means of salvation as seen throughout Scripture (Dt. 6:4, Is 55:3,11; Jn 6:63). The Holy Spirit is the Counselor who lives in us and teaches us to obey everything Jesus commands (Jn 14:16).

The virtue of listening is essentially an image bearing activity. According to Bonhoeffer, “Just as our love for God begins with listening to God’s Word, the beginning of love for other Christians is learning to listen to them.”²⁷ Listening within the context of pastoral formation deals with a three-way channel; between two persons in an exchange of thoughts and ideas, there is the acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit who is actively listening and ready to counsel. According to Williams, reiterating St. Augustine’s thoughts, “Knowing God is bound up with knowing self, and knowing the self is impossible apart from knowing God and the work of God in one’s life.”²⁸ A mentor works in partnership with the Holy Spirit. It is an intricate dynamic. Even as we strive to listen to our brothers and sisters, we acknowledge that God has a voice and speaks into the situation. Listening to God is also an essential part of mentoring.

²⁶ Michael P. Nichols, *The Lost Art of Listening* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), 15.

²⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Explorations of Christians in Community* (New York: HarperCollins, 1954), 98, quoted in Brian Williams, *The Potter’s Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 120.

²⁸ Henry Chadwick, trans., *St. Augustine in Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), x.i. (1), quoted in Brian Williams, *The Potter’s Rib: Mentoring for Pastoral Formation* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 126.

There is a serious deficit of listening in the Nepali culture. The culture spills over into the church and even more into leadership patterns. Oral culture is dominant where day-to-day life happens on speaking terms. People are vocal and animated when they communicate. Speaking is highly valued for success and growing networks, and listening is equated with passivity. Listening is thought to be an undesirable trait that produces deficits in life and society. A culture of listening needs to be seriously cultivated and effectively practiced. This culture of listening must begin within the church, and that must start within the leadership of the church. Contemplative and active listening skills need to be practiced not only to better understand each other, but also as a way of honoring God and respecting and affirming others. Mentoring can only happen when there is active and reflective listening, so both mentors and mentees must learn and perfect this craft, bringing it into the very fabric of the church culture.

Exercise: Read Isaiah 55:1-11 (or Matthew 4:1-11) in *Lectio Divina* format. Note how God is speaking and how we are to listen. What does Jesus say in unison with the prophets?

Discuss: What kind of listening does God want us to practice in our mentoring relationships?

Spiritual Discernment: The spiritual life consists, in large part, of discernment. Each day we make decisions that define our lives through habits practiced, identities formed, and collectively created culture. Christian tradition has recognized this and made decision-making a substantial part of the spiritual disciplines. By definition, a pastor-as-

spiritual-leader is one who steadfastly treads the contours of the life of faith. with all its struggles; to live out faith through various seasons, so that he or she is able to help others walk through life better. Pastors are not perfect, but they have learned through trial and error and are able to counsel and guide fellow sojourners in the life of faith. They have acquired skills and knowledge to help others navigate the course. Spiritual discernment, according to Liebert, “is the process of intentionally becoming aware of how God is present, active and calling us as individuals and communities so that we can respond with increasingly greater faithfulness.”²⁹

St. Ignatius of Loyola, a sixteenth century priest who founded the “Society of Jesus,” known as the Jesuits, started the spiritual discipline called “Awareness Examen”³⁰ Examen is a simple daily practice of reviewing the day to remember God and to look for traces of his involvement in our daily lives. He became so convinced of the importance of this practice for spiritual discipline that he counseled Jesuits “never to abandon it, no matter how urgent the ministry.”³¹ The Bible is full of illustrations of situations that require discernment. God’s people, made in his image, are called to make choices; to choose God over the idols and godlike powers around them. Disciples live on the verge of decision at every juncture of life. Spiritual discernment is possible because the Holy Spirit, who is our counselor, teaches us to do everything Jesus taught (Jn 14:26). He is active in equipping, guiding and providing through discernment. He enables us to make decisions consistent with who God is and what he desires of us.

²⁹ Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 8.

³⁰ Jesuit Institute, “The Examen,” *jesuitinstitute.org.*, copyright 2018, accessed January 28,2020, <http://jesuitinstitute.org/Pages/Examen.htm>.

³¹ Liebert, *The Way of Discernment*, 3.

Desire is perhaps the most important matter concerning discernment. We will ultimately achieve our hearts deepest desire. Lighter desires may easily dissipate, but deeper longings will always find a way into our lives, our habits, and into the culture we create and follow. Essentially, that is what determines our joy and satisfaction in life. The point of Jesus' parable of the pearl is that if anyone desires the kingdom of God, it must be their strongest desire. Pastoral formation requires discipline of desires towards spiritual maturity, that which is consistent with the body of Christ. Mentoring will observe and guide the process towards that *telos*.

Discussion: Discuss and write down qualities or characteristics that you think are foundational to mentoring ministry in Nepal that are not mentioned or discussed above? As practiced within our culture, how can we know or measure the right person or character traits suitable for pastoral ministry?

Action plans: Make action plans for your mentoring ministry.

Write down which of the above-mentioned qualities and characteristics you will look for in the person you will mentor, and how will you ensure those are in place?

How will you practice the skills of listening and discernment in the mentoring relationship?

Lesson Five

Process of Mentoring

Goal: The trainees will understand the five phases of the mentoring program, and determine to begin practicing it following the training.

As studied above, mentoring is a process. Mentoring for pastoral formation keeps Christ in the center of the dynamics of the relationship. Mentoring involves pastors making their eyes, ears, voice, and hands available to younger pastors. It allows for the Holy Spirit to help sort out the details of relationships heading toward the goal of formation. Mentoring for pastoral formation should keep in mind these two factors: a) its purpose is to unearth the potential of the mentee, enabling him/her to engage in God's Kingdom work with the mind and attitude of Christ; and b) it must take place within the community of a worshipping body. The following are some measurable phases that can assist in evaluating the process of mentoring pastoral candidates for Nepali churches.

Preparation Phase: Search and Readiness for Pastoral Candidates

In Nepal, ministry workers are not hard to find due to the rapid growth of the church and Christian mission work. There are many lucrative incentives to join the ministry. In the least, pastoring is a stable job in a country with a very high unemployment rate, an opportunity to stand in front and preach every week, and offers a degree of recognition and honor. The search for candidates must be a thorough process of discernment by the candidate and the church committee. Discerning this must be a spiritual and organic process. There must be a time of observation over seasons of life to

allow character to ripen and the calling to be confirmed. The process must be nurtured in the candidate's natural habitat and setting as much as possible. Pastoral candidates must show these indications³²: 1) Holy Spirit generated desire, 2) aptitude and competence for ministry, and 3) the recognition and confirmation of the church. These three must be present and discernible.

Each group of churches, possibly classis or presbytery, should have a candidates and credentials committee made up of the senior pastor, and at least one representing elder, a deacon, a staff member and a lay member of the church. The initial interest and commitment of the candidate must be stated in writing. There needs to be a Spirit-influenced decision-making process, where committee members discuss certain character traits imperative for pastoral ministry such as integrity of heart, listening skills, humility, commitment to continued learning, etc. An interview process must ascertain deeper issues that may comprise motivations for going into pastoral ministry. Identifying a candidate must involve recognition of an individual's spiritual gifts and felt-calling; but also, the approval of church elders and leaders who have observed many seasons of life and confirm this particular calling. This should be a prayerful process.

Phase One: Moral and Spiritual Character Formation for Pastoral Ministry

Once calling is assured and candidates are ready, the mentoring process can commence. Commitment to pastoral formation must be clearly stated. Each person undergoing the process should sign a covenant contract that is spiritually motivated and

³² Williams extracts these principles from H. Richard Niebuhr, Charles Spurgeon, and John Newton. See Williams, *The Potter's Rib*, 171.

relationally binding, but not legally binding.³³ They must subscribe to the vision and mission of the institution, as well as to the values set for the mentoring course. The candidate should agree upon the moral and spiritual standards set by the mentor and the authorities. A church committee, including pastors, should set up a suitable course and assign an appropriate mentor within the local church and agree to re-evaluate after the first phase. This phase should also provide a recommended path for the next phase. The initial phase should be more observational and is foundational for continued mentoring in the desired ministry area.

Phase Two: Biblical, Theological, Leadership and Spiritual Disciplines

Teachability is a required characteristic of spiritual leadership. Each candidate should commit to a continual process of learning. As it is often said, “the demise of a leader in Nepal is that he or she stops learning.”³⁴ According to their ability and level of education, mentees shall set out to acquire biblical and theological education aside from mentoring. There should be a set curriculum of study.³⁵ If the candidate is competent and desires to serve in an educated congregation, a proportionate theological degree should be required.³⁶ Otherwise, there are discipleship and leadership-training programs available

³³ See Covenant Contract in Appendix A.

³⁴ Knowing the vast variation in educational background, this statement is heard in every leaders’ conference of NRC, and is embedded in the leadership culture of the church.

³⁵ ITEEN, International Theological Education by Extension, Nepal offers correspondence theological course that can be suitable for those who cannot go for formal education.

³⁶ In the case of a city church, Bachelors in Theology (B.Th.) may be required for ministry leaders, at this phase of the church in Nepal. If the candidate desires to enter a teaching ministry, a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) may be required.

in the church which can supplement the training. These programs can ensure the candidate's investment in a learning culture and thereby set a precedent for their ministry. Other digital and oral teaching materials are also available through web-based or pre-recorded audio and media materials made available through the church. In every case, continued biblical and theological learning should be expected of each candidate.

Phase Three: Mentoring for Pastoral Ministry

Credibility in ministry comes with discipleship passage. Eugene Peterson draws an interesting parallel to Jonah's call, and Jesus' call to Peter to the pastoral vocation saying, "Every true gospel vocation is a resurrection vocation that arrives after passage through the belly of the fish."³⁷ One arrives at the ministry after dying to self. The aim of all forms of training is readiness for pastoral ministry. The mentor who has served as a pastor for at least seven years should be responsible for mentoring and providing appropriate accountability in both the directions- to the mentee and the authority.

The mentee shall study Scripture regularly, both individually and in community, where Jesus is imitated. The mentee should be given the responsibility to lead weekly home fellowships and small group meetings organized by the church.³⁸ The mentor should make mentoring appointments with the candidate not less than once a week. During these sessions, they can discuss issues pertaining to personal relationships, moral and ethical issues, spirituality, as well as theological or other ministry matters that have to

³⁷ Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 156.

³⁸ Churches in Nepal are organized by "home fellowships" where family and neighbors gather for worship, Bible Study and prayer once a week. Small Groups are formed on the basis of common interests.

do with shepherding in the way of Jesus. The mentor should also be responsible to provide quarterly appraisals and recommendations for any further training.

Phase Four: Mentoring for Spiritual Leadership

Pastors are shepherds first and then leaders. As such, leadership in the church is unique in that it requires maturity beyond what is taught in institutions. Spiritual leadership is servant leadership; servanthood does not come naturally to anyone. It must be learned through discipline and evaluated practices. As Fryling says, “When we are driven by these needs [praise, pleasure, position, power, prestige, productivity, perfection and possessions], we lose our spiritual compass by which to align ourselves to God and his purposes, and thus we pursue our own purpose for recognition and leadership of control.”³⁹ Leaders must guard themselves against these temptations; mentors need to be able to spot and name them if such inclinations exist. Spiritual leadership can be deceptive. It is possible that while knowing and preaching, life practices can be sucked into the culture of the wider society. Both persons involved in mentoring should be keenly attentive to the goal of increasing in maturity towards Christ-likeness in leadership. At this phase, calling into pastoral leadership must be certain, and a candidate should not be recommended for further mentorship in pastoral ministry if this spiritual maturity is not present.

³⁹ Robert A. Fryling, *The Leadership Eclipse: Shaping How We Lead by Who We Are* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 166.

Discussion: Do you think these phases will adequately observe and ensure pastoral candidates are prepared for leading a church? Give any suggestion you may have.

How is spiritual leadership different than other leadership found in the world?

Phase Five: Evaluation for Readiness and Appointment

Evaluation is a necessary step at each level of mentoring, but an absolute in the final phase. As Williams says, “our eyes are remarkably dull when it comes to self-examination.”⁴⁰ Training will eventually come to a point of *telos*, while mentoring does not. For the training to reach its goal, the mentor should provide periodic evaluation for the mentee. The purpose of these evaluations is to provide a clear picture along the journey and progress of the mentee. An approval process should be set with the wisdom and blessing of the pastors and community representatives. While reports should be required in writing, the character and readiness will be clear by the fruit of the mentee’s labor. Key areas of evaluation will be: first, the commitment to the pastoral vocation, second, spiritual disciplines, and third, faithful service to the covenant community. Evaluations will take into consideration the mentee’s aptitude and wholehearted commitment to the spiritual leadership.

Discussion: In the mentoring phases proposed above, what values and character will ensure the readiness of a candidate for pastoral leadership. How can we ensure that this is achieved?

⁴⁰ Williams, *The Potter’s Rib*, 61.

Action plans: Make action plans for the next three to six months for yourself or your church.

Write an action step you personally will take to establish mentoring programs.

How will you ensure that right candidates are selected, enrolled and go through the mentoring program successfully?

Conclusion: Mentoring is a process in which, according to Williams, “they [mentors] should impel the mentee toward the *telos* of their apprenticeship—clarification of their self-understanding as a person in Christ and a pastor to Christ’s church.”⁴¹ According to Augustine, “pastoral *habitus*, the disposition shaped by God with others includes an effective disposition that leads one to love God in another person.”⁴² Mentors are responsible to ensure these realities surface in the process. While education and skills are essential, mentoring alone can provide the accountability necessary to draw out certain desired characteristics. Only a culture of covenant commitment can ensure proper outcomes; half-hearted commitment to the program will not.

This mentoring manual is designed as a short introduction to ensure initial pastoral commitment for what would require a lifetime to achieve. It assumes a certain level of theological maturity and cultural aptitude, as discernment is key to understanding the process of mentoring. Over time, with the help of the Holy Spirit, commitment to these phases of mentoring will ensure genuine character, attitudes, and skills which can be adequate for a life-long pastoral ministry.

⁴¹ Ibid., 92.

⁴² Ibid., 48.

CONCLUSION

What began as an effort to map out a training plan for Nepali pastors soon became a quest to uncover the treasure of leadership principles buried in the soil of missions and church history. As a Nepali pastor, the one bearing responsibility for casting vision for a sizeable church movement at a national scale, unearthing these pearls is of even greater importance. Fifteen years into the journey of guiding this movement is a timely place to pause and ruminate on what has gone before us, reconsider where we are at, and reimagine where we are going; all this in an effort to be reinvigorated for the task at hand.

Through a study of the brief history of the Nepali church, many lessons were learned. For several centuries, missionaries along the India-Nepal border sustained a concerted prayer effort. They patiently waited for God to work as they anticipated the opening of Nepal to the gospel; and in time, the doors and windows were flung open. When this happened, there was an unmistakable zeal for the gospel evident in these early stories. Coupled with this zeal, these missionaries chose to trust God to provide leadership to the sprouting young church without taking unnecessary control. They imprinted the very DNA of the church with not only a zeal for prayer and evangelism, but also a legacy of servant leadership that inspires many leaders today. We have been reminded through their experience that the greatest cause to live for is the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have also learned that true leaders are not distant or domineering, but instead serve God by leveraging their life and gifts to enable others and cause them to flourish.

There are some crucial lessons for church leadership that can be extracted from our history. First, God's Spirit is alive and active in preaching, planting and growing churches in Nepal. Second, our resilience as a church comes from being grounded in

Christ, bearing his cross in the local context, and keeping the mission in focus. And third, the leadership of the church must have solid foundation laid on biblical theology of the church in order to mobilize practice-based communities. While fully aware of the complexities along the process, wise church is one that takes those lessons to heart, and invests in crafting systems through which pastoral leaders can be adequately prepared for the challenges ahead.

In the young church of Nepal, claiming less than seventy years of history, many blessings are evident. The church has experienced unprecedented growth brought about by the missionary movement of the first four generations. It has seen the power of God advance the gospel through evangelism; with people coming to the Lord through the exercise of charismatic gifts of God's Spirit, not a far cry from what occurred in the book of Acts. Through these efforts, churches have grown far and wide. God is raising up people to lead and serve the church at all levels. In his mercy, God has used even flawed forms of leadership to propel this church forward, and it has emerged faithful through hard seasons of persecution and government opposition.

In the wake of this exponential growth and blessing, issues of grave importance have surfaced that the church in this generation must reckon with. The Nepali church must develop patient endurance and the skill of discerning God's Spirit. Deeper roots in discipleship to Christ must be established through increased emphasis on spiritual disciplines and mentoring as the means to leadership formation. We must persevere amidst the challenges at hand, but moreover, prepare for the potential turbulence of the future. This can be done through a renewed biblical ecclesiology and refocus on equipping leaders for pastoral leadership through mentorship.

The foundation of this ecclesiology is the idea that the covenant people live and flourish in God's presence; and that the Body of Christ is set in motion by the Holy Spirit to work alongside him in accomplishing his mission in the world. Moreover, the church must be understood as a practicing community who lives by Christ-centered characteristics. Cultivated practice is the way to flourishing in the church. The church learns through experience in relationships, from brokenness to healing, from joys and celebrations to worship. In the reciprocal pattern of receiving and giving, the church learns the course of pastoral formation through cultivated practice. And slowly, healthy ecclesiology and practices will become imprinted into the fabric of the church and its leadership culture.

Many lessons have been taught about how to ensure a healthy and sustainable church. There is nothing more effective, than a relationally dynamic community—within the Body of Christ—where leaders consistently call attention to Christ as the center and the model. Mentoring relationships bring these core principles and values into accountable practices. Christ centered mentoring is a means to becoming a Christ centered community. This community is one where pastoral leaders draw on their experience within authentic human relationships, seeking to serve and enable others. We have also seen that mentoring was the way of Jesus Christ with his disciples. We can conclude then, that mentoring relationships are the most comprehensive tool available to us in our quest to form leaders for Christ's church.

The first part of this project examined the history of the Nepali church in order to more fully grasp both the positive and negative leadership patterns and principles imbedded into the DNA of the church. Then, through the study of relevant literature and

Scripture, more evidence was provided highlighting the urgent need for reframing Nepali ecclesiology. It argued that in order to lead a church, one must first have a foundation of biblical ecclesiology; the basic understanding of the church as the body of Christ with Christ as the head. The church is made for the mission of God, first inside, and then out to the world. God invests his Spirit in her and invites her to partner with him in revealing the redemptive plans that Paul refers to as mysteries, hidden since the creation of the world (Eph 3:10).

The second part of the project discussed the cultivation of these practices, with leadership of the church in mind. The project included a training manual, “Mentoring for Pastoral Formation.” The manual was tested with two different groups of pastors and teachers. The training revealed that there is a serious deficit of mentoring in the Nepali church, therefore, there is an urgent need for it to become a part of pastoral formation courses. It also showed that mentoring has profound value in the formation process because genuine relationships can provide means for maintaining an appropriate, yet comprehensive, level of accountability. People learn best through vulnerable relationships within a practicing community, where shared and evaluated experiences shape learning and provide motivation for transformation.

Implications and Plans for Future

From the process of the implementation and assessment of the manual, there are key findings I have noted that are worth mentioning again. The implementation reconfirmed that traditional systems limited to single-church and academic institutions are inadequate. Mentoring, through evaluated processes, is the best way to holistically

nurture a person into pastoral leadership. Among young pastors, there is an evident desire for improved ways of church leadership. There is also a high demand for contextually sensitive materials that are both critically examined and theologically sound. The secret to better pastoral leadership lies in investing time and effort into laying a solid theological foundation on spiritual grounds. Towards that end, this manual will be useful in meeting the real needs of the Nepali church and offering hope to future leaders.

Pastoral leaders need safe spaces to lay down their burdens. They often feel isolated and alone in ministry and find no place to vent their grievances. After group mentoring was introduced to NRC pastors and leaders in 2017, the hunger and desperate cry for this kind of accountable partnership in ministry became evident. So much so, that they requested to never gather without such a session. Mentoring can be a partnership that brings healing to the soul. If pastors are given sufficient space and relational guidance in this process, who knows what possibilities lie ahead for the church and the mission of God?

The next step with this study and training materials is to edit the material based on the recommendations made by the teachers and participants of the training. Then, it will be translated into Nepali. There will be appointed groups studying at multiple levels and discussions among the pastors of NRC,¹ particularly over the study materials on pastoral leadership presented in the first part of this book. In the study, they will focus specifically on the applications of the principles in Nepali church context. When we come together,

¹ Chapter three of this project titled, “Theology of Pastoral Leadership in Nepal” was presented to a sizable group of pastors and church leaders associated with RPS Seminary on February 23, 2020. The group, particularly senior pastors, reconfirmed the urgent need for a refined Nepali ecclesiology for the churches, especially in the wake of evangelical vibrancy and rapid church growth.

either at national conferences or regional fellowships, there will be senior pastors with more years of experience in ministry and possibly higher theological education to facilitate. The NRC will assess and put into practice the ecclesiology presented in this study.

And for the training manual on Mentoring for Pastoral Formation, there will be two more training phases to complete it. The next phase will be in the Regional Pastoral Fellowship, and the following one in local churches, where each pastor and leader will share their experience and report on their mentoring. They will be guided to continue on the mentoring track until it becomes habitual and eventually a part of the leadership culture in the NRC churches.

The assessment has also unearthed some changes that need to be made for future usage. The manual is supplied with sufficient information, but mentoring requires practical tools, which will be incorporated in the future trainings. The manual will be translated into Nepali and made more culturally sensitive. I hope to have wider input from pastors associated with the seminary to contribute to the discussion and reflections.² Their suggestions will be incorporated as much as possible into future editions of the manuals. This will also help to solidify mentorship as an integral practice in the life of these pastors.

Potential Wider Applications

This study on pastoral leadership has unearthed many key strengths of the Nepali church along with many areas needing revision. The strengths need to be exploited, and

² See footnote 1 of this section.

weak areas need to be identified so that changes can be tailored. Although the study and manuals were written primarily for the Nepali Reformed Churches' pastors and Reformed & Presbyterian Seminary, where pastors are being trained, the applications go out to the greater Nepali churches as well; both in Nepal and among the fast-growing churches in the Nepali diaspora. There is a national phenomenon of mass labor migration out of the country.³ Many new Nepali churches are being planted in countries like South Korea, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, UAE, Qatar, and India. Nepali churches everywhere suffer from a lack of biblically and contextually developed materials.

Even where resources are available, there is limited accessibility; which is part of the reason for inadequate theological training. The developed materials need to be made widely accessible, and more practical. This is where the need for a training manual on mentored ministry becomes even more urgent. With those identified needs and challenges in view, this study and training materials will be not only translated into Nepali, but also contextualized and distributed for the church's use. It will be restructured into an interactive learning format and delivered in a more user-friendly manner. Nepal, as a developing nation, is largely remote; travel and access is made even more difficult by the Himalayan landscape. Through the NRC media department, we will make these study and training materials available through audio and visually interactive platforms, so that the training and resources can be accessed. There is no doubt that the teaching and training materials presented in this project will propel NRC churches along the path of

³ According to the Kathmandu Post, a daily newspaper, 639,167 Nepalese left the country to work abroad in 2018-2019 fiscal year. See Miscellaneous, "More Nepalis Going Abroad for Employment," *The Kathmandu Post*, posted September 18, 2017, accessed January 31, 2020, <https://kathmandupost.com/miscellaneous/2017/09/18/more-nepalis-going-abroad-for-employment>.

our vision as we plant and nurture Christ-centered churches across the land and around the world.

May the Lord, the Great Shepherd of the church, lead us as we strive!

APPENDICES

Appendix A

A Covenant Agreement

I, _____ (write name) agree to take an active part in this training on “Mentoring for Pastoral Formation” at my will, desiring to learn the material and act upon it. I submit to the format and values of this learning process, honor its spirit and agree to follow through with the action plans. God the Holy Spirit helping me along this process.

_____, _____ (signature/date)

Kingdom goals are intended change as a result that you will achieve through stated action plans; an intended outcome that will bring change towards God’s economy and towards the people equipped for service. It is the spiritual outcome anticipated because of the commitment to mentoring.

State a Kingdom Goal for your intended mentoring ministry in the next 3-6 months in your life/church/ministry.

Kingdom Goal:

Action plans are steps you will take to achieving the stated Kingdom goals. In the next 3-6 months, what concrete plans do you want to make for mentoring in your life and ministry for both, a) be mentored, b) mentor others? What steps and actions you would like to take to see the desired change you want to bring in your life, life of the church/ministry through mentoring.

Make SMART action plans (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound)

Action Plans:

Appendix B

Provisions of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 Relevant to Freedom of Religious Belief¹

Article 4. State of Nepal:

(1) Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism-oriented, federal democratic republican state.

Explanation: For the purposes of this Article, "secular" means religious, cultural freedoms, including protection of religion, culture handed down from the time immemorial.

Article 17. Right to freedom:

(1) No person shall be deprived of his or her personal liberty except in accordance with law.

(2) Every citizen shall have the following freedoms:

(a) freedom of opinion and expression,

Provided that:

(1) Nothing in sub-clause (a) shall be deemed to prevent the making of an Act to impose reasonable restrictions on any act which may undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity, nationality and independence of Nepal or the harmonious relations between the Federal Units or the people of various castes, tribes, religions or communities or incite caste-based discrimination or untouchability or on any act of disrespect of labour, defamation, contempt of court, incitement to an offence or on any act which may be contrary to public decency or morality.

Article 18. The Right to Equality

There shall be no discrimination on grounds of religion in the application of general laws.

Article 26. Right to freedom of religion:

(1) Every person who has faith in religion shall have the freedom to profess, practice and protect his or her religion according to his or her conviction.

(2) Every religious denomination shall have the right to operate and protect its religious sites and religious *Guthi* (Trusts).

Provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the regulation, by making law, of the operation and protection of religious sites and religious trusts and management of trust properties and lands.

(3) No person shall, in the exercise of the right conferred by this Article, do, or cause to be done, any act which may be contrary to public health, decency and morality or breach public peace, or convert another person from one religion to another or any act or conduct that may jeopardize other's religion and such act shall be punishable by law.

¹ Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary, trans. "Constitution of Nepal 2015," *constitutionnet.org*, copyright 2016, accessed January 31, 2020, <http://constitutionnet.org/vl/item/constitution-nepal-2015-official-english-translation-ministry-law-justice-and-parliamentary>. See pages 3, 9-13, 18.

Criminal Code 2074 (2017)²

Section 9 Offence Regarding Religion

Article 155. Religious or holy places

- 1.No one should damage, hate or insult or other related act on religious belief or holy places or pollute graveyards of any ethnic groups or community intentionally.
- 2.If found guilty; there will be punishment of three years of imprisonment and penalty of thirty thousand rupees.
3. If foreigners are found guilty; they will have to be deported within seven days after completing imprisonment mentioned in first clause.

Article 156. Religious sentiments

1. No one should stab religious sentiments of any caste, community or ethnic groups by using texts, writing, verbal, symbols or any other means.
2. If found guilty; there will be punishment of three years of imprisonment and penalty of thirty thousand rupees.

Article 157. Religious traditions

- 1.No one should create any kind of obstacles in religious tradition of other faith being practiced since ancient times.
2. If found guilty; there will be punishment of one year of imprisonment or penalty of ten thousand rupees or both.

Article 158. Religious conversion

- 1.No one should involve or encourage in conversion of religion.
- 2.No one should convert a person from one religion to another religion or profess them own religion and belief with similar intention by using or not using any means of attraction and by disturbing religion or belief of any ethnic groups or community that being practiced since ancient times.
3. If found guilty; there will be punishment of five years of imprisonment and penalty of fifty thousand rupees.
4. If foreigners are found guilty; they will have to be deported within seven days after completing the imprisonment in third clause.

Article 159. Statute of limitations

Filing of lawsuit is not valid after six months from the date of knowledge of offence committed for article. Such status of limitation will be three months from the day of offence committed for rest of the articles of this section.

² The National Penal (Code) Act, 2017, “Chapter 9: Offence Relating Religion,” *molipa.gov.np.*, posted on December, 2018, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://www.moljpa.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Penal-Code-English-Revised-1.pdf>. See pages 99-100.

APPENDIX C
Evaluation Form

Please rate the training program where 1 is least and 10 is best by circling O the number

The Training Program

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Dates: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. Time schedule: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. Place of gathering: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Comment:

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The Training Material

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Understandable: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. Practically applicable: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. Rhythm of sessions: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 4. Facilitations: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Comments:

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Facilitators

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1. I can understand: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. Pace of presentations: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. Complete the manual: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Comments:

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Hospitality:

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1. The comfort of seats and beds: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 2. Food & beverages: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 3. Space and environment: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Comments:

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We want to improve the quality of this training, so please share any other suggestion you have below.
Thank you.

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