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SHARED WISDOM:
A GUIDE FOR MENTORING YOUNG ADULTS

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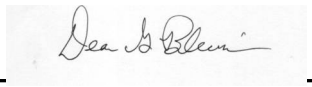

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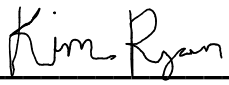

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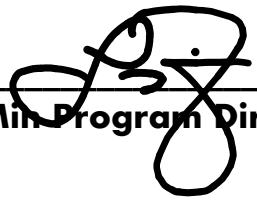

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ABSTRACT

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Shared Wisdom:
A Guide for Mentoring Young Adults

The significant challenges emerging adults face in this cultural moment require creativity, relational investment, and a commitment to spiritual formation rooted in time-tested ways. Older adults in the Church must be educated about the need and desire on the part of young persons to be mentored. They must take this challenge seriously and be inspired to invest in emerging adults. Further, they must be given a clear understanding of what mentoring is and how they can engage in this art effectively and with confidence. Lastly, aspiring mentors must understand the need to be deeply rooted in the practice of the spiritual disciplines and compelled to equip those they mentor in these critical practices. Therefore, this thesis seeks to meet the mentoring needs of emerging adults (18-30 years), to understand the most effective way to mentor, and to recognize the necessary role of the spiritual disciplines in the mentoring relationship.

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What Young Adults Really Want (and Need)

Young people have always been a significant part of the congregations I have had the privilege of pastoring for almost three decades. Over the years, I have found that many young adults feel fragmented during this time of unique transition in their personal lives. They also feel disconnected from the churches in which they have grown up where tepid spiritual formation, tainted by legalism, has often represented the norm.

Yet emerging adults hunger for a deeper, more complex expression of the Christian faith than many of them have inherited. They long for a safe community where they can ask and process hard questions and doubts rather than receive a list of dos and don'ts or pat religious answers. Young people want older, wiser adults to guide them on this journey—not just their faith journeys but their life journeys too. These young adults want to make a difference in the broken world in which they find themselves, but they need help and guidance.

However, not just any adult will do. Emerging adults need older adults they can trust. Young people need generous-hearted, thoughtful, hospitable companions to come alongside them as they try to make sense of their own stories (identity), how their stories intersect with the bigger God Story (faith) and, finally, in what direction these stories point them as they consider what God wants them to do with their lives (vocation).

The problem, unfortunately, is our faith communities do not often provide the safe spaces or committed companionship that young adults hunger for as they grow up in the Church and reach this critical juncture in their lives. The posture of many of our churches reflect an "enlisting in"[1] approach to ministry and church life that favors programming over people. It is an

[1] Randy D. Reese and Robert Loane, *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2012), loc 233, Kindle.

approach that simply seeks to fill slots: we need a Sunday School teacher for our third graders or an extra soprano in the choir, so who can fill the post? In short, an "enlisting in" approach to ministry is a quick fix methodology that meets an immediate need but does not contribute to the long-term formation of a person, especially a young adult.

In addition to this "enlisting in" approach to ministry, many churches also embrace an "enclave" mentality which favors truncated age groupings over and above intergenerational classes, worship gatherings, service projects and more. Sadly, this "enclave" model of ministry ends up sidelining many young people, limiting their relationship connections. Churches that employ these models of ministry find their tether to young adults easily frayed once they leave a youth group. And, in the absence of substantial investments of time and energy by older adults in direct personal relationships, young adults are in danger of getting "lost in transition" as sociologist Christian Smith puts it in his seminal book by the same title, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood.*[2] Smith contends young adults easily lose their footing when the supportive scaffolding of their youth group, immediate family, or even high school soccer or debate team is gone. As a result, young people head into adulthood only to discover the Church is ill equipped to guide them on this new journey when faith and life become complex. In short, programmatic enlisting in and enclave approaches to ministry are inadequate ways to keep emerging adults vitally engaged in the Church, much less their Christian faith.

What roots youth and young adults in a deep and durable faith is *mentoring.* Mentoring represents a relational, "investing in" approach to character development and faith formation that meets emerging adults right where they are during their most crucial transitional years. Long-

[2] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

term mentoring enables young people to process their big life questions. It provides safe space for emerging adults to process the doubts that this season of life inevitably raises. Further, mentoring helps to nurture and refine the burgeoning dreams young adults have for their life and vocation. It allows the time and space they need to process these dreams, their stories, their struggles, and more. Most importantly, mentoring provides a vital means by which emerging adults come to understand how their unique gifts and histories intersect in meaningful ways with the larger story of God and the world.

Although mentoring holds much promise for the Church struggling to hold on to its young, obstacles remain. Many faithful and concerned adults recognize that something is amiss. They watch their youth head out into the world with a precarious faith and fragile ties to the Church and worry they will never return. Caring adults want to respond but don't know how. And when presented with the possibilities of mentoring, many are simply at a loss as to what exactly mentoring is, much less where to begin. Add to these challenges the fact that most older adults believe they are inadequate for the task. This lack of knowledge about the practice of mentoring, how to do it, and how to feel confident in the practice needs to be addressed in our faith communities. Therefore, equipping caring, older adults with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence to engage in such long-term, spiritually formative relationships and practices with younger adults provides the focus of this dissertation.

The chapter that follows, *Mentoring 101,* describes the two key tasks of understanding emerging adults and understanding mentoring as a practice. It begins with a review of the contours of the development stage now known as "emerging adulthood" which increases our understanding of the unique challenges young adults face in this cultural moment. As already noted, at the exact time and season of life when young people are experiencing major transitions

and making critical life decisions (going to college, getting married, deciding a career, etc.), society withdraws traditional supports. Young adults leave home and no longer live under the supervision or protection of their parents. Secondary education no longer provides a consistent structure for their lives either. For those growing up in the Church, specific age level programming often ends at the youth group as well. And for those who have grown up in faith communities that lack an intergenerational approach to ministry, relationships between young adults and the larger congregation grow exponentially harder to maintain once the student moves away from home or goes to college. Consequently, as sociologist Robert Wuthnow writes in *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty- Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*: "younger adults are having to invent their own ways of making decisions and seeking support for those decisions."[3] Wuthnow concludes that this lack of support means young adults find themselves surrounded almost exclusively by their peers with little guidance, influence, or challenge from older adults, much less the Church. All these factors and more point to a profound and pressing need for appropriately trained mentors and mentoring communities for emerging adults in the 18-30 age range.

Following this explanation of the emerging adult developmental stage and the critical need for mentoring in the midst of it, *Mentoring 101* turns to defining the practice. It describes and analyzes the nuances of various mentoring approaches and recommends best practices where the concept of narrative plays a key role. With a narrative foundation, the unique stories and defining life moments of both mentor and mentee serve as the main curriculum for character development and spiritual transformation.[4] This reflective work – sharing wisdom—requires

[3] Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 12.
[4] Reese and Loane, *Deep Mentoring*, loc 790, Kindle.

seasoned adults who, over a substantial period, ask questions, give perspective, share insights, and simply walk alongside young adults in friendship as they mature in their character and develop spiritually. This process defines the essence of the art of mentoring and cannot be fast-tracked. Thus, an intentional and enduring commitment to the work is also highlighted as key to the success of any mentoring endeavor.

Furthermore, *Mentoring 101* outlines the benefits of this "investing in" approach for the larger Church. Effective mentoring adds to the vibrancy of a church's life and ministry by rooting young people more firmly in their faith for the long haul. Effective mentoring naturally allows for intergenerational connections to happen and flourish too. Effective mentoring also creates safe spaces for tough questions to be asked about faith and life at a time when safe spaces are often hard for young adults to find.

Chapter 3, *What's Discipline Got to Do With It?* goes on to explore the critical role of the spiritual disciplines in the mentoring relationship. I am convinced that the path towards full adulthood and Christian maturity requires shared practices that both the mentor and mentee undertake individually and when meeting face-to-face. Specifically, I make a case for several overlooked disciplines to be incorporated in the mentoring relationship: hospitality, giving testimony, honoring the body, and discernment/the practice of examen. First, hospitality describes a key posture and practice in the mentoring context as it creates a welcoming environment in which the mentee feels safe to be honest, ask questions, wrestle with their faith, and share big dreams. Secondly, giving testimony is part and parcel of the recommended narrative approach to mentoring where, as noted above, mentee and mentor share their stories at a deep level to gain courage and wisdom for the path forward. Third, mentoring remains a holistic endeavor, which means the body must also be considered worthy of attention and care.

This discipline of honoring the body proves especially important for those mentoring women because most women cannot articulate their spiritual stories apart from how they view their relationship with their bodies. Lastly, discernment serves as a critical component of the mentoring task, and the practice of examen is given special attention as a helpful tool in that process.

Chapter 4, *A Retreat Model for the Novice, Faint of Heart and Intimidated,* turns to practicalities, focusing on a retreat format as the most effective means for preparing older adults to mentor. As mentioned above, older adults do not often know what is being asked of them when a young person approaches them to be a mentor. Further, many lack the self-confidence they need to engage with young adults in this way. Thus, chapter 4 offers an interactive and immersive retreat template that defines what mentoring is and offers initial training for those who lack the skill and confidence they need to effectively mentor in a supportive, on-the-job training environment. Additionally, through hands-on activities, this immersive retreat helps a fledgling mentor practice the spiritual disciplines that will play a key role in their regular interactions with mentees as well as their own spiritual practice going forward.

Lastly, but importantly, the retreat template allows would-be mentors to spend extended and dedicated time with others who have a similar passion for investing in the lives of young people. And the bonds forged during such an intensive retreat have the potential to be long lasting and generative as participants network, resource, and encourage each other beyond the confines of the retreat setting.

Mentoring 101

Before engaging in a mentoring relationship, older adults need to have a firm understanding of the complex world young adults are entering in this cultural moment. This chapter begins by reviewing literature detailing many of those challenges with the help of key experts who have studied this age group extensively. Also included are initial reflections on how trained mentors can aid young adults in embracing more holistic and healthy practices of vocational discernment and spiritual formation. The remainder of the chapter examines the specifics of mentoring, leaning again on key voices in the field. Here mentoring is defined, and an effective framework for the practice outlined, and implications for the Church examined.

Getting our Bearings

The Beatles' familiar tune *The Long and Winding Road* is an apt theme song and metaphor for what emerging adults experience in an elongated developmental stage that can last from age eighteen to thirty and beyond. As emerging adults begin their journey towards full adulthood, they are confronted with two polarities: the pull of consumerism/materialism (self-absorption) versus the pull of rugged individualism/isolationism (self-sufficiency). Both undermine the spiritual formation of young adults as well as distort their vocational vision. One characterizes the good life in terms of personal success, wealth, and name recognition while the other seduces young adults into believing they can forge the future on their own with little help from or regard for the welfare of the larger community or even the common good. The siren songs of these two polarities are especially destructive during this development stage when young adults are making big life decisions and asking critical questions like *Who am I? What is my purpose? What pursuits do I invest in so I can become the person I am meant to be?*[5]

Unfortunately, without the guidance and wisdom of older adults, the cultural pressure for emerging adults is to move in one of these two directions. First, the pull of

[5] James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984), 1.

consumerism/materialism/self-absorption is embodied in what has come to be known as moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD) which is pervasive in both our churches and the wider culture. The term was first introduced by Christian Smith in his 2005 book entitled *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenager*s which he co-wrote with sociologist Melinda Lundquist Denton.[6] MTD is a life construct which asserts there is a God, but that God only intervenes in our lives when needed to assure our individual happiness. Unfortunately, MTD leads to a tepid and consumeristic spirituality as young adults invest themselves in self-focused activities and habits in the new contexts in which they find themselves, eventually concluding they have little need for God or the Church. Not surprisingly, religious observance and adherence declines precipitously during this time too.

Secondly, rugged individualism or self-sufficiency is another ubiquitous cultural message that urges young adults to dig out their own pathway to the future with little or no input from those they previously relied on for support. The result is often a growing detachment from the needs of the world at large and a deep skepticism about the ability of older adults to offer relevant advice on the journey towards full adulthood.

These destructive cultural messages make spiritual formation for young adults a huge challenge. In short, at a time when they are most susceptible to the pull of consumerism or rugged individualism, emerging adults are no longer under the direct tutelage of the Church, their parents or others who have contributed to their spiritual and character formation. Sadly, young adults are trying to weave the fabric of their life into a coherent pattern at the exact moment when they are most untethered from supportive faith and family communities.[7]

[6] Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[7] David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 2-3.

How then can the Church make a difference in the lives of young people who are on a journey towards full adulthood in the face of such cultural pressures? The argument of this dissertation is that those communities committed to educating and training adult mentors will be the determining factor in keeping young persons tethered to the faith—faith communities that intentionally invest in youth/young adults during their most critically formative years. And while the second half of this chapter defines the practice of mentoring and its implications for the larger Church, what follows is a closer look at four domains of specific challenge for young adults including a discussion of how consumerism/self-absorption or rugged individualism/self-sufficiency insinuate themselves into the evolving habits and life rhythms of emerging adults in these specific areas.

Surveying the Landscape

Psychologist and researcher Jeffery Jensen Arnett coined the phrase "emerging adulthood" to describe the temporary, fluid, and exploratory nature of this stage of life that occurs between adolescence and adulthood. The title of his ground-breaking book captures the spirit and tenor of this life stage: *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties.* Arnett notes that young people are not making enduring life choices as early as they once did because their journey to full adulthood has become elongated.[8] Emerging adults have become "tinkerers" or nomads moving from job to job, city to city or from church to church trying to find the sweet spot where their dreams and ideals will meet the reality on the ground. Further, emerging adults typically eschew long-term commitments in what has become

[8] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from The Late Teens Through The Twenties* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.

something of a cultural phenomenon: FOMO—fear of missing out.[9] Young adults want to hedge their bets and experience life to the fullest, but this often results in long delays in getting married, starting families, and committing to a specific job or church. Emerging adults also pursue graduate education in larger numbers to prepare for the ever-changing job market in which they find themselves, further postponing long-term commitments.[10] In short, the traditional markers of adulthood have shifted dramatically making young adults more susceptible to a life that is focused on self-absorption and/or one that migrates towards self-sufficiency.

Arnett contends the new markers that define adulthood in the current cultural moment are a young person's ability to make independent decisions, achieve financial stability, and to accept responsibility for oneself.[11] He lists additional features of this winding road towards adulthood as *identity exploration* (who am I and what do I want out of life?), *instability* (tinkering, moving often, unstable jobs/relationships), *being self-focused* (finding one's footing, learning to become self-sufficient), *feeling in-between* (youth and adulthood), and a sense of *optimism for the future* (as young adults become independent of parents and chart their own path).[12] In light of these new adulthood markers and the distinguishing characteristics of this development stage, the most significant challenges confronting emerging adults can be condensed into four domains:

- *Finding one's footing* - finances, education, and job/vocation.
- *Making life commitments* – relationships, marriage, and parenting.
- *Care of the mind and body* - embrace or rejection of cultural values when it comes to sexuality, and the use of alcohol, specifically.
- *Soul care* - religious commitments and spiritual practices, or lack of.

What follows is an expanded discussion of each domain as well as summary reflections on how mentoring can address each challenge.

[9] Arnett, 206.
[10] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 36.
[11] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 15.
[12] Arnett, 9.

Finding One's Footing. Unlike previous generations, emerging adults are not eager to settle down. It is a time of unprecedented freedom, and they want to explore all the possibilities.[13] Identity formation is a huge factor in this stage of life. It is why most young adults defer big decisions during their early and late twenties. While travel and gap years (a year away from formal education) are gaining popularity and are a good option for some, college is the preferred choice.[14] For those who do go to college, apply themselves, and finish, these years are key. As Arnett argues: "In many ways, the American college is the emerging adult environment *par excellence.* It is expressly designed for the identity explorations that are at the heart of American emerging adulthood."[15] He goes on to say: "the American system offers young people more of an opportunity to find the educational and occupational path that will be the right fit for them."[16] College, therefore, provides a fertile environment for emerging adults to do identity formation in tandem with vocational discernment even as they begin to take responsibility for their daily life activities and grow emotionally, relationally and spiritually.[17]

In addition to the traditional college experience, the pursuit of graduate level education is becoming more common among young adults as the job market increasingly requires more training and skills.[18] This ever-changing economic picture adds to the financial and vocational instability that many young adults feel and experience during this time of life. Thus, they are given to job-hopping, not just in a quest to find that ideal job as they drill down on what their true interests and gifts are, but also because of economic realities.[19] Many entry-level positions,

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[13] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 7.
[14] Arnett, 163-164.
[15] Arnett, 166.
[16] Arnett, 154.
[17] Arnett, 159.
[18] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 36-37.
[19] Wuthnow, 33.

for example, don't provide substantial benefits or a high enough salary for young adults to pay off burgeoning college debt, much less cover daily living expenses.[20]

Emerging adults who come from lower income households also face significantly more challenges in this area than their middle and upper-income counterparts. Many do not have the financial wherewithal to go to college much less the luxury of identifying a vocation that matches their passions.[21] Young adults from lower income households are often relegated to manufacturing jobs and low skill, low wage work, suffering disproportionately in the job market.[22] Despite all these differences in economic opportunities, however, the distinguishing markers of emerging adulthood still apply, including a sense of optimism about the future. While there is a greater likelihood of depression for young people in these circumstances, Arnett concludes that "most of them remain remarkably positive about their lives and feel a sense of freedom, fun, and excitement, despite their formidable obstacles."[23] Thus, young adults of all stripes carry with them a notable and pervasive hope that, regardless of current circumstances, their lives will improve for the better.

The pursuit of higher levels of education, financial stability, and vocational fulfillment are all important factors in why young adults are taking longer to find their footing than previous generations and underscore the need for wise and patient mentors during this elongated development stage. Mentors can, for example, offer sage advice on big financial decisions such as whether to incur debt or further debt in the pursuit of an education or higher education. Mentors can help with vocational discernment, fanning the flames of a young person's dream for that ideal job but, at the same time, providing valuable and objective feedback regarding its

[20] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 35.
[21] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 263.
[22] Arnett, 251-252.
[23] Arnett, 249.

feasibility. They can assist young people in connecting the dots between their own giftedness and chosen vocation (or area of study) with God's good design for them and the world.[24] Wise mentors can also encourage young adults to pursue vocations with lesser incomes for the sake of the greater good instead of what makes them the most money—pushing against the cultural mindset of self-absorption that portrays a successful life largely in consumeristic terms. Finally, mentors can help young adults see their primary vocation as loving God and neighbor, not pursuing their own self-interests.[25]

Making Life Commitments. In our current cultural context, thirty has become the new twenty-two which is the typical age most young people married and began a family in years past.[26] However, emerging adults today delay marriage in record numbers and for several reasons. As noted above, one key factor is the increasing number of young adults pursuing higher education and advanced degrees.[27] Women, in particular, are eschewing traditional roles within the home and family while simultaneously pursuing non-traditional vocational roles that require more education.[28] Further, women often find themselves outpacing their male counterparts in annual income and level of job responsibilities which makes finding attractive marriage partners a challenge.[29] Young adults also want to be in a stable life position financially and vocationally before committing to marriage and parenting since this often requires settling down in a specific town, neighborhood, and a church. For young people today then, marriage is

[24] David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church... And Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 142.
[25] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 129.
[26] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 124.
[27] Arnett, 5-6.
[28] Arnett, 5-6.
[29] Arnett, 142.

no longer viewed as a pathway to maturity, but as something that happens when they reach full adulthood.[30]

Another notable trend among young adults is the increasing number of couples who are cohabitating instead of committing to marriage. In previous generations marriage was viewed as a social contract. For Christians especially, it was "designed to reflect God's purposes for the good of the world."[31] However, emerging adults today view marriage very differently, much more in terms of a relationship that will lead to their "individual satisfaction and fulfillment."[32] This perspective is a huge nod towards the consumerism/self-absorption polarity mentioned above. While cohabitating is often viewed as the first step towards marriage, the lack of firm and long-term commitments in these relationships impedes their longevity.[33] Unfortunately, entering a relationship with the chief aim of seeking one's own self-fulfillment often leads to the ultimate demise of the relationship.

Once again mentors can serve a crucial function in this aspect of identity formation by helping young adults develop their relationship skills within a safe and nurturing environment. A mentor can, for example, stand in as a surrogate for the relationship attachments a mentee has missed out on because of their family history—specifically, unhealthy attachments that are distorting their approach to friendships and romantic partners.[34] A mentor can also model the kind of covenantal vow that is needed in a successful marriage by committing to a long-term relationship with the mentee and, through this relationship, enable the mentee to hone the critical skills needed in a marriage (or any significant friendship) such as the ability to extend

[30] Setran and Kiesling, 166.
[31] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 167.
[32] Setran and Kiesling, 167.
[33] Setran and Kiesling, 168.
[34] Setran and Kiesling, 188.

forgiveness, to communicate clearly and to engage in healthy conflict.[35] In sum, a mentor can play a crucial role in helping a young adult achieve relational and emotional maturity so that marriage becomes a healthy option where the point and purpose of the relationship moves beyond the need for self-fulfillment alone (consumerism) to a desire to serve and care for the other.

Care of the Mind and Body. Since the advent of the sexual revolution and the birth control pill, men and women alike have felt great freedom to pursue non-traditional sexual relationships. Virginity has lost its luster in all but the most religious of quadrants. As Jeffrey Arnett notes: "Most emerging adults believe that sexual intercourse is best reserved for a special relationship, but only those with conservative religious beliefs think the special relationship must be marriage."[36] Increasingly then, the concept of tinkering fits well in the sexual context for young adults too as it is not uncommon for them to have multiple sexual partners and cohabitate.

These new sexual trends, however, have grave consequences. While the specter of AIDS and sexually transmitted disease has mitigated some of the more harmful impacts of our casual sex culture, contraception use among young adults remains inconsistent and unintended pregnancy rates remain high.[37] Further, multiple uncommitted and emotionally detached sexual encounters regularly result in guilt and regret for many emerging adults, especially women who "long for the kind of intimacy, loyalty, and security that only committed relationships can deliver."[38] Additionally, many emerging adults who are having sex before marriage and at a very young age report a vague and uneasy sense that they are not psychologically ready for sex[39] or

[35] Setran and Kiesling, 197.
[36] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 98.
[37] Arnett, 113.
[38] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 154.
[39] Arnett, 97.

have irretrievably given away something sacred.[40] In her book *The Wisdom of Your Body: Finding Healing, Wholeness, and Connection through Embodied Living*, Psychologist Hilary McBride underscores these findings, noting that premature sexual activity is connected to significant mental health concerns, especially for girls.[41] Unfortunately, the sexual freedoms emerging adults are enjoying in the wake of the sexual revolution lead to a myriad of destructive practices with the quest for sexual fulfillment often ending in disappointment and trauma.

Harmful sexual behavior is also deeply interconnected with alcohol abuse among young adults and often rampant on college campuses. As Smith writes in *Lost in Transition,* many young adults are quick to follow the normative cultural script of consumerism and self-absorption that says "once a person leaves home, they need to exercise their new freedom by partying, acting wild and crazy ... particularly consuming large amounts of alcohol and maybe some drugs."[42] The unprecedented freedoms of college life lead to a multitude of unsafe and risky behaviors like these but most especially sexual ones such as "hooking up" which is characterized by "single encounters with little to no commitment for further relationship."[43] While many positive and formative experiences can happen in college, the experience doesn't automatically result in maturity for emerging adults. And with traditional supports like parents gone, many young adults find they lack adequate self-control, especially in these areas of sexual activity and alcohol use, to do what is necessary to succeed in this environment.[44]

Sadly, other problems prove to be just as menacing for young adults including eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. Although young adults embrace and value their new-found

[40] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 172.
[41] Hilary McBride, *The Wisdom of Your Body: Finding Healing, Wholeness, and Connection through Embodied Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021), 197.
[42] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 142.
[43] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 164.
[44] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 149.

freedoms, they readily recognize the downsides of becoming a responsible adult and often resort to addictions to alleviate their inner turmoil.[45] As emerging adults struggle for independence and tinker with their identity formation, they confront an increasing sense of isolation once traditional supports are withdrawn. Thus, it is a time when young adults are easily tempted to go it alone (rugged individualism) and resort to unhealthy substances or behaviors to sustain them instead of turning to trusted adults.

Again, this struggle illustrates an aspect of emerging adulthood where committed mentors can offer significant support and life-giving alternatives to risky and addictive behavior. By providing safe spaces for honest dialogue about sex and addiction, mentors can help emerging adults avoid significant pitfalls on their winding road to full adulthood and agency. Mentors can dialogue with young adults about past hurts, regrets, or abuses that have led to dysfunction and self-harm. They can honestly explore and reshape the mentee's sexual mores and values by initiating conversations that move beyond a simple list of dos and don'ts, enabling emerging adults to construct a livable sexual ethic.[46] For those prone to go it alone, engage in harmful behaviors, or fall into deep wells of anxiety and depression, a mentor can be a constant companion reminding a young adult they do indeed have trusted companions on the journey.

Soul care. It is no secret that more and more young adults are looking well beyond the Church walls for answers to life's deepest questions.[47] They are increasingly becoming religious nomads, not necessarily antagonistic to the faith but unengaged and disconnected from it.[48] Emerging adulthood is a time to forge a worldview, to decide what morals and values one will embrace to make sense of the world. But as more young adults are exposed to the larger world in

[45] Arnett, 276.
[46] Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 162.
[47] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 132.
[48] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 84.

college and beyond, their perspectives get recalibrated and the beliefs they once took for granted increasingly challenged.

Regrettably, the tepid religious training many emerging adults receive as youths coupled with the prevalence of moralistic therapeutic deism in our churches does not bode well for strong spiritual ties to remain intact once young adults leave home. Most emerging adults are not adequately prepared morally or spiritually for the complex world they enter and prone to adopt life habits that are focused on either consumerism or rugged individualism in this critical area of soul care.[49] Rampant materialism, individualism, our entertainment culture, even delayed marriage are all factors that mitigate against traditional church participation and spiritual vitality among emerging adults. Emerging adults are increasingly opting for self-focused activities such as traveling, playing sports, and connecting with friends over and above spiritual pursuits. It is a time when young adults want to indulge in all that life has to offer, effectively putting faith on the back burner until a later and more convenient time, if not forever.[50]

Further, even though most Americans still believe religious institutions bring people together, strengthen communities, and help the underserved, negative perceptions threaten to overwhelm the good. More and more, emerging generations view the Church as compromised and combative, consumed with maintaining money and power and co-opted by politics.[51] Young people who grew up in the Church find themselves "caught between the church as it is and what they believe it is called to be."[52] They are yearning for a more conciliatory and inclusive expression of their faith and spirituality. Thus, emerging adults wounded by or distrustful of the

[49] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 11.
[50] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 18.
[51] James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post Christian World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2017), 74.
[52] Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 77.

institutional Church exhibit little interest in organized religion once they have the freedom to choose. And they are exiting the Church at a rapid pace. "Nones" are now the largest religious group in the U.S. as every *one* convert to Christianity is offset by *four* defectors.[53] While some maintain a semblance of belief in Jesus, continue to participate in spiritual practices, and even seek out the company of other believers, the gathered Church is not an attractive or safe space for them.[54] This is especially true for single young adults who feel disenfranchised from faith communities with an inordinate focus on the traditional family. They are the ones most vulnerable to long-term detachment from the local church and faith altogether.[55]

Unfortunately, this pervasive long-term detachment is hard to unwind. Emerging adults who spend a decade or more away from the Church have adopted many "deforming" practices that contend against a regular worship practice, much less formative spiritual practices throughout the week.[56] Covid has only served to exacerbate this trend.[57] Additionally, their leadership potential within the Church is stunted. As David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling write in *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry:* "it will be challenging for these emerging adults to assume leadership roles within their congregations. Leadership often depends on continuity of participation, contextual knowledge, and the establishment of relational networks characterized by trust."[58] Lastly, a long-term

[53] James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z*, 24.

[54] Josh Packard and Casper ter Kuile, "Gen Z is keeping the faith. Just don't expect to see them at worship," *Religious News Service* (September 23, 2021), https://religionnews.com/2021/09/23/gen-z-is-keeping-the-faith-just-dont-expect-to-see-them-at-worship/?mkt_tok=NDEzLVpJUC02NjIAAAF_s1L65Kzwv-TgyQSQNTTmOCdixo6oBPyqBWhoyk0QlC95OFeNKBgwcnPNY9D1JF9BQky5nmvlqGpDpzLGyuGWPcgRA-NMsXdJVxsS.

[55] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 55.

[56] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 85.

[57] Springtide Research Institute. *The State of Religion & Young People 2021: Navigating Uncertainty* (Farmington, MN: Springtide Research Institute, 2021), 22.

[58] Setran and Kiesling, 86.

relational disconnection between younger and older adults means the faith modeling that naturally happens when the Body gathers for worship, service or fellowship is lost to this next generation. Setran and Kiesling conclude:

> "Without question, the 'mentoring gap' in emerging adulthood is one of the most significant factors blunting spiritual formation in these years. Emerging adults have little direct access to the wisdom and experience of older adults, lacking settings in which to hear the stories and success and failure of those who have gone before them. They miss out on tangible role models of exemplary adult living, lacking settings in which to see clear pictures of faithful adult practice."[59]

In sum, young adults are missing out on a whole host of explicit as well as implicit opportunities to be shaped and nurtured in their Christian faith and character development simply by their physical absence in the Church.

Lastly, there is some dispute among researchers about whether the precipitous decline in religious participation among young adults has implications for their involvement in civic affairs. While most emerging adults say they want to make a difference in the world, the question remains whether they have the actual willpower and drive to do so.[60] In *Faithful Generations: Effective Ministry Across Generational Lines,* Pastor John R. Mabry argues that young adults are preoccupied with their own personal happiness and closed circle of friends and are, thus, "remote, disinterested observers of larger cultural, civic, and political life."[61] Christian Smith agrees, adding that most young adults "feel disempowered, apathetic, and sometimes even despairing when it comes to the larger social, civic, and political world beyond their own private lives."[62] He contends cynicism about politics and political leaders runs high while the self-

[59] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 212.

[60] Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 36.

[61] John R. Mabry, *Faithful Generations: Effective Ministry Across Generational Lines* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2013), 156-57.

[62] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 196.

focused nature of this stage of life often prevents emerging adults from considering wider community involvement. Young adults don't believe they have the time, skills, or resources to invest in any of these activities as they simply try to survive and find their footing—a bend towards the rugged individualism polarity.[63] Yet, Smith warns, if not now, when will young adults learn these things? When will they embrace the values of volunteerism and charitable giving in their faith communities and neighborhoods?[64]

Jeffery Arnett offers a counter argument, noting that young adults are serving at a much higher rate than previous generations in the Peace Corps, Teach for America, and AmeriCorps, for example. They are also engaging in less risky behavior than in recent years with statistics on crime, alcohol related incidents and more all down. Therefore, Arnett concludes: "These favorable patterns do not seem to reflect a generation that has no moral foundation."[65] He contends that young adults do balance individualism with a collective concern for others in much more robust ways than Smith allows. Although Arnett concedes this life stage demands a lot of self-focused activities, he believes the individualism of emerging adults is adequately "leavened by collectivistic values of care and concern for others."[66] Robert Wuthnow chimes in with a more nuanced critique. He reasons that civic involvement looks different for emerging adults today because they tend to gravitate toward short term, time-limited commitments versus long-term commitments to a specific organization as previous generations did.[67]

Regardless of a young adult's spiritual and civic proclivities, these are areas where a committed mentor can challenge a young person to look at the larger world with a posture of

[63] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 210.
[64] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 211.
[65] Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 237.
[66] Arnett, 240.
[67] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 42.

service and generosity as well as be a tether back to the faith communities and spiritual practices in which the mentee was originally grounded. At the very least, a mentor can model habits and rhythms of life that offer the mentee an alternative perspective on what the good life looks like thus recalibrating and reshaping their evolving worldview. Mentors can also provide a hospitable space for mentees to share their big questions about faith, politics, civic issues, community involvement and more.

While young people are leaving the church in record numbers and the challenge to bring them back into the fold is daunting, the good news is many still maintain a semblance of belief and a strong desire to belong to a community.[68] Emerging adults are intensely relational and long for deep connections with trusted adults, mentoring relationships that bring purpose and meaning to their lives.[69] In *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Formation* Pastor Richard Dunn and Professor Jana Sundene underscore this reality: "stories about the emerging-adult years contain evidence of a powerful longing for spiritual companionship, community and guidance on the journey."[70] Thus, a lack of attendance at Church does not necessarily equal a lack of interest in the Christian faith. While it is true that more young adults are talking to each other about spiritual things rather than religious authorities, this demographic has not been wholly lost to the Church.[71] Mentors will make the difference in reconnecting these lost generations back to the faith. But what exactly is mentoring and what can effective mentoring look like in the Church?

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[68] Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 18.
[69] Springtide Research Institute, *The State of Religion & Young People 2020: Relational Authority* (Bloomington, MN: Springtide Research Institute, 2020), 18.
[70] Richard R. Dunn and Jana L. Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults: Life-Giving Rhythms for Spiritual Formation* (InterVarsity Press; Downer's Grove, Il, 2012), 23.
[71] Wuthnow, 120.

Mentoring Defined

"*Teenagers and emerging adults desperately need other mature and concerned adults who genuinely care about and for them. Young people need to be loved to put it as plainly as possible. They need to be engaged, challenged, mentored, and enjoyed."*[72]

Despite the wealth of literature and urgent conversation around the topic, most people are hard pressed to explain what mentoring is and/or know how to do it, especially in the Church. There is also a pervasive fear among older adults about their ability to step into such a role. This lack of knowledge, as well as confidence, is a big reason why most faith communities opt for the easier enlisting in and enclave models of ministry described above. In trying to determine what effective mentoring looks like then, a review of current literature is useful to help define the practice as well as to survey the various templates that are being used by those actively and confidently involved in the work.

The roots of the practice of mentoring are found in the ancient and time-honored practice of apprenticeship whereby a younger protégée shadows the skilled master and over time equals or exceeds the master's abilities, becoming the master in turn. Although this template has relevance for modern-day mentoring, the consensus among those who are writing about this topic in the faith community is that character formation is most crucial. In short, mentoring is not primarily about what a person does but rather who they are becoming. And although coaching (honing the professional skills of a mentee), counseling (addressing an acute emotional or mental need), and spiritual direction (helping the mentee grow spiritually) are all practices closely aligned with the mentoring task and roles mentors are asked to fill, none fully capture the breadth of the mentor's work.

[72] Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition*, 7.

Alluding back to the metaphor of a long and winding road, the mentor's primary job is best described as a *fellow pilgrim*, one who walks alongside a young adult on their elongated journey to full adulthood. The pilgrim/pilgrimage image is especially relevant as it is a time-honored description of the Christian's episodic as well as life-long quest to be in intimate relationship with Christ and to walk in his ways. A pilgrimage typically entails the formation of deep community as fellow travelers embark on a mutual and extensive journey towards a holy place (a specific goal), engaging in life-changing conversations along the way. Pilgrims who have walked the path before serve as wise instructors for those new to the journey. They point out the pitfalls and dangers along the path as well as the resting and 'festing' places to stop for renewal, support, and encouragement.

Guide serves as a key word and image to describe the mentoring relationship as it should never be approached in a transactional way. Emerging adults are not looking for pat answers to their complex questions, rather they are longing for "relationships built on presence and listening, not advice and fixing."[73] Thus, a mentor should never position himself or herself as the answer man/woman but rather as a companion on a young person's long road to full adulthood. In the introduction to his book *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership*, Walter C. Wright uses the helpful analogy of a *Sherpa* to describe the mentor's role.[74] Like the pilgrim, a Sherpa is also a guide but this time up the summit of a challenging mountain. The subtle nuances of the Sherpa's role give even more insight into the breadth of the mentor's role. For example, the Sherpa ropes himself to the climber in a covenantal and intentional relationship. The Sherpa does not do the climbing for his charge but connects himself to that climber in a meaningful way

[73] Springtide Research Institute. *The State of Religion & Young People 2021: Navigating Uncertainty*, 15.
[74] Walter C. Wright, *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2004).

to protect him from life-threatening mistakes. Equally important, the Sherpa takes her cues from the climber as to how far and how fast to go. In the end, the Sherpa is more interested in journeying with the climber than reaching the summit.

Simply put then, mentoring is being in relationship with another person. Dunn and Sundene emphasize mentoring does not require a theological degree, psychological training, or a certain vocational background but, at base, a willingness to be committed to another with our time and presence: "effective spiritual guides for emerging adults spend time building spiritual friendships ... [hiking] alongside others in suffering, celebration and all that lies between, helping to identify the work of the Holy Spirit in the ups and downs of everyday circumstances and decisions."[75] Put another way, like a veteran pilgrim or Sherpa, an effective mentor walks alongside a young person, at the pace they set, guiding when needed, and pointing out the pitfalls and joys along the way, much like any good friend would do. Once such genuine care, concern and friendship is exhibited over an extended period by an invested mentor, the happy result is that relational authority is gained with the mentee, allowing the mentor to speak into that young person's life with honesty and influence.[76]

An Effective Framework

To begin this good work then, like any budding friendship, mentoring starts with story because stories enable us to reflect on life's central moments in meaningful and coherent ways, especially our faith stories.[77] A narrative approach encourages a mentor to pay attention to their

[75]Dunn and Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults,* 77.

[76] Springtide Research Institute, *The State of Religion & Young People 2020: Relational Authority*, 11.

[77] Sondra Higgins Matthaei, *Faith Matters: Faith-Mentoring in the Faith Community* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 46.

own story (although it always takes a supporting role) while noticing what God is up to in the life of their mentee. Stories allow a mentor to come alongside a young person on a journey of discovery—finding out who they are meant to be and what they are meant to do with their lives. Key narrative questions that a mentor asks include: *How has God shaped this person I am journeying with? What patterns and themes do I see? What are the defining moments in this person's life? What is God trying to communicate in and through those moments? How does God want this person to act/lead in the world based on who they are and what we are learning?*

A narrative approach to mentoring also creates hospitable space for wounds and trauma to be addressed. Although the mentor's main job is not that of counselor, many emerging adults are dealing with significant gaps and deficiencies in their own personal stories which must be addressed from time to time in the mentoring relationship. As Martin Sanders contends in *The Power of Mentoring: Shaping People Who Will Shape the World*, young adults are growing up without "the necessary personal, emotional, or developmental building blocks of character, confidence and courage that are required to create effective leadership qualities."[78] Sanders believes a big reason young adults are taking much longer than previous generations to reach full adulthood is because of the trauma and brokenness they experience growing up. Thus, emerging adults need mentors willing to help them process their pain. They need mentors to help them reframe and redeem these narratives of brokenness. They need mentors to help them move forward on their journey toward healing, growth and, ultimately, conformity to Christ's image.

Another benefit to a narrative approach is that it levels the playing field. Mentor and mentee share their own unique stories as they journey together which, in turn, become the

[78] Martin Sanders, *The Power of Mentoring: Shaping People Who Will Shape the World* (Chicago, IL: Wingspread Publishers, 2004), xiv.

foundational curriculum God uses for the mentee's growth and maturity.[79] Mentors are not expected to be the "sage on the stage," handing down the definitive answers to all of life's most perplexing questions, rather story and testimony, meaningful conversation, and life experience are the primary building blocks of the relationship. Thus, when explained in these narrative terms —along with the use of the metaphors of fellow pilgrim, guide, and friend noted above—the task of mentoring becomes much more understandable and compelling, not to mention less intimidating to those wanting to invest in emerging adults.

Once narrative is established as the central curriculum for mentoring relationships, the question that naturally follows is *how then is the relationship to be structured?* Wright insists intentionality is crucial and it is the mentee who must take the initiative and set the pace.[80] While Dunn and Sundene concur that intentionality is key, they place the onus on the mentor, urging them to do far more than just "hang out" with their mentees. They define mentoring as "proactively loving another" which "calls us to approach our disciple-making relationships with purpose in order to move the disciple toward life transformation in becoming like Christ."[81] Dunn and Sundene also believe intentional mentoring requires times of regular evaluation initiated by the mentor to assess whether true transformation is happening in the life of the mentee and to determine if adjustments need to be made in the relationship.[82]

Other experts in the field embrace a more nuanced view of intentionality in the mentoring relationship. They contend that rigidly structured methods of mentoring are alienating to emerging adults. Sue Edwards and Barbara Neumann underscore this phenomenon in their book

[79] Reese and Loane, *Deep Mentoring*, loc 790, Kindle.
[80] Wright, *Mentoring,* 29.
[81] Dunn and Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults*, 90.
[82] Dunn and Sundene, 100.

Organic Mentoring: A Mentor's Guide to Relationships with Next Generation Women arguing that most young women (and men) prefer an organic approach to mentoring, relying on the natural rhythms of relationships and the quality of those relationships to drive the process.[83] For example, young adults don't want someone deciding who their mentor is. They want to approach a person with whom they have relational chemistry, similar life circumstances (career, life stage, etc.), similar values, and a faith life worth emulating. Further, young adults don't want to commit to a fixed set of meeting times but rather connect with their mentor during those times when they are struggling or most need advice.

Although the exact meaning of intentionality is elusive, it is essential in any effective mentoring relationship and, thus, a few recommendations are in order. First, mentor and mentee need to set several initial (and regular) meeting times to get acquainted with each other's stories and to determine the mentee's specific goals. Having a set of structured questions to guide these initial conversations is also helpful so that both parties know what to expect. (Specific resources are recommended in the Artifact below.) Once a certain comfort level is achieved, the relationship can embrace a more fluid structure, i.e., set questions/curriculum can be discarded, and meeting times arranged as needed. However, consistency is key throughout the course of a mentoring relationship which requires one party to take responsibility for scheduling from the start. Above all, mentors need to remember that emerging adults are more interested in the *quality* of the relationship that is established between mentor and mentee and less interested in the *quantity* of time spent in structured meetings. Individual mentor/mentee pairings must, therefore, determine what is best for their specific relationship and adjust as necessary.

[83] Sue Edwards and Barbara Neumann, *Organic Mentoring: A Mentor's Guide to Relationships with Next Generation Women* (Grand Rapid, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 64.

Another important question is how long the mentor/mentee relationship should last. An enduring, "investing in" way of doing ministry is certainly advocated here as the best way to truly shape and form young persons to be more like Jesus. This perspective lies at the core of the argument Randy Reese and Robert Loane make in their seminal work, *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey*:

> "... leadership formation efforts must take into account this compelling (but profoundly distorting) expectation of faster ways. Most people, whether pastor or congregation, will be looking for shortcuts and quick fixes. We must resist the pressure to squeeze our formation efforts into an efficient shape. Paying attention to the growth of another necessitates much patience and perseverance. It requires 'a long obedience in the same direction.'"[84]

Reese and Loane commend the slow and patient work of deep mentoring as the primary way to equip, disciple, and mobilize the next generation of young adults—indeed leaders. However, like intentionality above, the definition of "long-term" in the mentoring relationship can be somewhat nebulous too. Planning a regular and consistent check in time to evaluate the relationship helps. New seasons of life, for both mentor and mentee, such as marriage, children, a new job, a move, etc., are key times to assess whether to continue a relationship. Ultimately, however, it is up to the mentor and mentee to decide when or if it is time to stop.

In conclusion, although the structure and intentionality that a mentoring relationship takes and the time frame over which it happens may vary, effective mentoring is defined as using a reflective posture and narrative approach whereby seasoned elders, over a substantial period of time, intentionally ask questions, give perspective, share testimony, guide, and encourage mentees with the goal of developing and deepening their character and spiritual life.[85] Beginning steps have already been articulated above regarding what effective mentoring looks like in the

[84] Reese and Loane, *Deep Mentoring*, loc 505, Kindle.
[85] Reese and Loane, loc 705-716, Kindle.

context of the challenges emerging adults face on their long and winding road to full adulthood. The question to which we now turn is how the Church can engage in effective mentoring.

Mentoring in the Church

"... continued failure to prayerfully and pro-actively gather local communities of Christ's disciples to invest relationally in the spiritual journeys of young adults will ultimately have catastrophic spiritual consequences."[86]

In *Faith Matters: Faith-Mentoring in the Faith Community,* Sondra Higgins Matthaei argues that mentoring necessarily includes meaning making and happens most effectively in the context of the faith community. She characterizes the work of the mentor primarily as nurturing another's faith: "Faith mentors assist us as we organize life experiences in order to discern and remake meaning from the perspective of faith. One of the functions of the faith mentor is to ask the important questions that lead us to insights about the meaning of our existence."[87] But the massive exodus of young adults from the Church in recent decades presents a significant challenge to what Matthaei is arguing for—*faith* mentoring. What then is the way forward?

The first step for faith communities is to admit that emerging adults are indeed getting lost in transition. Young adults do not receive the degree of support that children and youth in the Church enjoy as most age group activities and programming end at high school. And as Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Christian Smith, Robert Wuthnow, and others contend, emerging adults face several significant challenges on their journey towards full adulthood. The concern that whole generations are being lost to the Church is real. Therefore, faith communities must own up to this very troubling fact before any headway is possible.

The second step is for churches to start earlier. In *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World,* Dori Grinenko Baker and her colleagues make a case for intentional and mentored soul care to begin long before emerging adults enter

[86] Dunn and Sundene, *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults*, 19.
[87] Matthaei, *Faith Matters*, 46.

their elongated development stage and cite several examples of congregations that are proving successful in this endeavor. Baker alludes to the pioneering work of Christian Smith in *The National Study of Youth and Religion*[88] which concludes that most young adults reflect the religious faith and practices of their parents. Unfortunately, that faith is characterized largely by moralistic therapeutic deism.[89] Yet, despite Smith's grim conclusions about the prevalence of MTD among emerging adults as well as other disheartening trends, Baker extracts some hopeful nuggets. First, she notes the study underscores that the presence of invested adults in the lives of emerging adults makes a huge difference.[90] Second, she points out that the study argues "formative religious influences in the lives of teenagers have an impact on their embrace of faith in later years."[91] Overall then, Baker and her colleagues remain optimistic that emerging adults need not be lost in transition as there are specific steps churches and committed members can take to ensure young adults are rooted in a well-formed faith as they enter this critical development stage. Again, mentoring is key.

Baker employs the greenhouse metaphor of "hardening off" to help congregations reimagine their role with youth and young adults. "Hardening off" describes the leavening process that happens as youth embark on the long road towards full adulthood in the face of a myriad of challenges: "This is a time of slowly increasing exposure to harsh conditions outside the greenhouse, allowing the plant to become ever more able to sustain itself before it is transplanted to bring new life to other places."[92] Necessarily, the plant requires the wise and

[88] Christian Smith, "The National Study of Youth and Religion," accessed September 17, 2021, https://youthandreligion.nd.edu/.
[89] Dori Grinenko Baker, ed., *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010), 22.
[90] Baker, 22.
[91] Baker, 22.
[92] Baker, 13.

nurturing care of a gardener in the midst of the hardening off process to ensure a successful outcome. Likewise, Baker argues, children and youth need older adults to invest in their lives for the long haul as gardeners too (mentors, fellow pilgrims, Sherpa guides, etc.) if they are to become well-formed young adults. Fortunately, Baker and her colleagues offer a constellation of practices and postures that are formative for this journey to full adulthood with its incumbent hardening off experiences. What follows is a brief explanation of those most relevant to the mentoring task including the giving/receiving of testimony, mentoring among younger generations (children and youth), an intergenerational approach to ministry and conflict as a means toward mentored growth.

First, although some churches eschew the practice as outdated or unhelpful, properly curated testimonies can be formative for young people to both give and receive. Mission trips, for example, can be constructive opportunities for young people to practice a kind of examen that leads to rich testimony. Trip leaders can incorporate times of reflection into a group's daily routine and spend time reviewing each day, noticing when and where God shows up. And once these youth return to their home congregations, they can be given time in worship services and in other contexts to share their stories, their testimonies, and reflect on their experiences with the larger congregation. Receiving the testimonies of older adults, in turn, can validate the experiences of young people, further rooting them in their faith, and inspiring them to live differently in the world.[93] A similar practice can be followed in a one-on-one setting as mentors take the time to hear a young person's testimony (story), rehearse it back to them, and reflect on how it intersects with the larger God Story, even as the mentor shares their own testimony (story) of God's faithfulness, in turn. This spiritual practice will be revisited again in the next chapter.

[93] Baker, *Greenhouses of Hope*, 46.

Secondly, an intentional mentoring structure for all age levels is another intriguing practice for churches to consider. In the chapter entitled "Mozying: When the Young Mentor the Younger" in *Greenhouses of Hope*, youth minister Sinai Chung writes about her experience with this Korean Church practice whereby elder siblings and older children care for those who are younger.[94] By incorporating mozying into their structure and philosophy of ministry, these faith communities create spaces of radical inclusion for all. Mozying provides a place of belonging for young people and a specific role for them to play in leadership. Further, it perpetuates itself, creating a "chain of mentoring" that engenders ongoing enthusiasm for the practice within the larger congregation.[95] Thus, mozying has the potential to create a long-lasting culture of mentoring in churches accustomed to an enlisting in and/or enclave model of ministry.

Third, an intentional intergenerational approach to ministry and congregational life is an effective way of keeping young adults tethered to the Church and the Christian faith. This approach recognizes it takes a village to offer the comprehensive, long-term support that children, youth, and emerging adults need as the path to full maturity becomes ever more elongated and challenging. Further, most young people want to be considered a vital part of a congregation, not as appendages. They want to contribute. They want to participate in ministry and leadership. Thus, an intergenerational approach to church life and ministry challenges faith communities to be intentional and proactive about noticing the youth and young adults in their midst. It challenges churches to identify the gifts and graces of their young people and actively use those gifts in meaningful ways in the congregation. Lastly, an intergenerational approach to ministry goes a long way in nurturing the hopes and dreams of young people as it engenders

[94] Sinai Chung, "Mozying: When the Young Mentor the Younger," in *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World,* ed. Dori Grinenko Baker (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010), 58.
[95] Chung, 71.

confidence in their gifts and abilities as well as provides assurance that an entire faith community supports them.

Finally, in some congregations, conflict is a surprising but important incubator for spiritual formation and maturity in youth and emerging adults. In *Greenhouses of Hope*, a chapter entitled "Calling Among Conflict: What Happens to the Vocations of Youth When Congregations Fight?," Rev. Joyce Ann Mercer writes: "In greenhouses where conditions are less than ideal, some plants wither. But others can flourish, developing a certain resilience out of the difficulties they face."[96] For conflict to serve this formative role in a congregation, however, Mercer argues young adults must already be engaged in significant relationships with trusted older adults to help them process how "fighting with passion about justice, inclusion, and human dignity becomes, in itself, a practice that teaches and forms."[97] Emerging adults must already be integrated into the larger life of the congregation in meaningful ways, too: "the entire life of the church [has to be the] ground for young people's participation, leadership and formation."[98] Therefore, processing conflict is one aspect of mentoring that can lead to character development, transformation, and spiritual growth for the emerging adults in our faith communities.

Two additional mentoring practices (rooted in a narrative approach) that faith communities should consider employing with their youth and emerging adults are "dreamcare" and the creation of a sexual autobiography. Again, trusted mentors will be key to the success of such endeavors, but the first addresses the critical need for emerging adults to find their footing

[96] Joyce Ann Mercer, "Calling Among Conflict: What Happens to the Vocations of Youth When Congregations Fight?," in *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World ,* ed. Dori Grinenko Baker (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010), 187.
[97] Mercer, 167.
[98] Mercer, 176.

vocationally and the second for emerging adults to find their footing in healthy, enduring relationships.

The concept of "dreamcare" recognizes that youthful dreams are a critical part of identity formation for emerging adults. Every young person has a unique set of passions and gifts that both enlarge their heart and can also be used for good in the world. Such sparks of passion that are "rightly attended, can give direction to the identities and purposes of young people as they develop a sense of vocation."[99] Thus, emerging adults need their dreams to be heard and tended to by older adults, not dismissed. They need guidance about how to engage those dreams in healthy and realistic ways.[100] Young adults also need their dreams to be refined and interpreted through a God lens versus that of the dominant culture which prefers self-absorption and self-sufficiency over more meaningful pursuits.[101] In short, young adults need to see how their dreams intersect with the overarching story and purposes of God and how that impacts their vocational choices. Through dreamcare mentors can fan a God-given spark smoldering in the hearts of emerging adults in ways that contribute to God's healing of the world.

Professor David F. White recommends mentors follow four guidelines for this practice in his book *DreamCare: A Theology of Youth, Spirit and Vocation.* First, mentors need to *be attentive*, creating space for "vocational wonder."[102] This means reflecting with young adults upon their gifts and graces and how these might shape their future. Vocational wondering also includes paying attention to how a young person's story connects with the story of God and the larger needs of the world. Secondly, White suggests communities of faith *be intelligent*, helping

[99] David F. White, *DreamCare: A Theology of Youth, Spirit and Vocation* (Cascade Books: Eugene OR, 2013), 13.
[100] David F. White, 6.
[101] David F. White, 120.
[102] David F. White, 104.

young adults explore the big questions of life and to make sense of the world through the eyes of faith.[103] That is, faith communities need to create hospitable spaces where young adults can engage in safe conversations as their worldviews are being formed, worldviews that will ultimately determine their vocational choices.[104] *Be reasonable* is the next precept which urges mentors to assist young adults in doing "theological wondering,"[105] enabling them to judge between competing views of the good life and discerning the vocational path that is most faithful to God's mission in the world.[106] The last precept is *be responsible.* White argues young people need mentors to encourage and empower them in practical ways to take ownership and agency in their own lives, communities of faith, and in the larger communities where they live.[107]

The other area of specific concern that needs to be addressed more compassionately and directly by faith communities and committed mentors is the sexuality of young adults which profoundly impacts their ability to forge life-long commitments with others, especially marriage partners. Sex is often considered a taboo topic, yet the pervasiveness of casual sex among emerging adults has so many implications for the healthy (or unhealthy) development of their relationships and relationship skills, not to mention their relationship with God. Setran and Kiesling offer helpful guidelines for how care for the whole person can be done in a more intentional and strategic way in the Church. They center their recommendations around the framework of habits*,* urging older adults to courageously name the destructive body habits of the young adults in their care and point the way toward more life-giving alternatives. This can

[103] David F. White, *DreamCare,* 107.
[104] David F. White*,* 109.
[105] David F. White*,* 113-114.
[106] David F. White, 110-111.
[107] David F. White, 115-116.

include an exploration of daily routines that uncover priorities around work, friendships, exercise, eating, online habits, consumption of entertainment, spiritual practices and more.[108]

Setran and Kiesling also suggest emerging adults create a sexual autobiography which serves as a meaningful way to reflect with a trusted mentor on how their experiences and interactions with others have shaped their current habits towards relationships, their bodies, and their sexuality. Further, and importantly, Setran and Kiesling write that "Such an analysis emboldens them [young adults] to understand their strengths and weaknesses and to seek healing in areas of brokenness so that they can enter new relationships with freedom and self-understanding."[109] Such a practice can be transformational for young adults in an age when the Church has largely abdicated its role and voice in the discussion about sexuality. Lacking a coherent counternarrative, young adults are confused and easily persuaded to embrace the larger culture's values around this issue. But by confronting sexuality in careful and compassionate ways, faith communities can once again be vital places of repair, redemption, and formation for young adults mired in destructive relational habits.

Conclusion

The road to full adulthood is indeed a long and winding one for young people trying to navigate all the complexities of this development stage and, unfortunately, the Church has allowed many to get lost in the transition. Yet there is good news. Time and again research shows that meaningful relationships with older adults compel young people to stay rooted in their faith and active in the Church. Thus, mentoring is a key way the Church can halt the exodus

[108] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 44.
[109] Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 190.

of emerging adults away from the Christian faith and the next chapter focuses on the specific spiritual practices that mentors can engage in to meet the unique needs of young adults and ground them in a mature character and spirituality.

What's Discipline Got to Do With it?

The spiritual disciplines have a critical role to play in the mentoring relationship but not simply the standard core disciplines of prayer and Scripture study. To expand our theological vision of mentoring, this chapter pays special attention to the often overlooked and undervalued disciplines of hospitality, testimony, honoring the body, and discernment, coupled with a specific practice of the examen, and their role in grounding the work of mentoring.

Spiritual Disciplines as Critical Components of the Mentoring Relationship

"*... good conversations among spiritual friends and with a spiritual director are uncommon in our church communities. We don't need more churches, as we usually define the word. We need more spiritual communities where good friends and wise people turn their chairs toward each other and talk well."*[110]

The spiritual disciplines are a time-tested pattern of life and faith embraced by believers across the centuries and across traditions, and defined as "intentional practices, relationships and experiences that [give] people space in their lives to 'keep company' with Jesus."[111] Considering this definition, mentoring itself can be defined as keeping company with Jesus *alongside another.*

Importantly, the vibrancy and sustainability of the faith of the Early Church was grounded in practices such as prayer, worship, fellowship, and sharing meals. Over time, these practices shaped the character of believers in such profound ways that their lives became the evangelistic mechanism through which the Church grew so rapidly in the first three centuries. In *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church,* Alan Kreider underscores the important role these practices played in the flourishing of the Early Church:

> "... [the early Christians] were not concerned to cover the world evenly with evangelistic efforts. Instead, the Christians concentrated on developing practices that contributed to a

[110] Larry Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and are Forever Changed* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 10, Kindle.
[111] Adele Alhberg Calhoun, *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 17.

> habitus that characterized both individual Christians and Christian communities. They believed that when the habitus was healthy, the churches would grow."[112]

Thus, by keeping company with Jesus, but also keeping company with Jesus alongside each other, the early believers mentored each other in the faith. Further, the outside world looking in was compelled by their winsome lives and the Church grew exponentially. It is the contention of this chapter, therefore, that mentoring that is rooted in the practice of the spiritual disciplines has the potential to create similar outcomes today.

Emerging adults who sit at the epicenter of our fragmented and ever-changing world need sustaining and time-proven practices to ground them in their faith and enable them to flourish in life. Young people long for a "way of life abundant" they are not experiencing in traditional settings.[113] They need practices that move them past the superficiality they often encounter in today's institutional Church where maintenance is paramount. They also need fellow pilgrims and friends to join them on this journey. Emerging adulthood is the exact right time to lean on others and lean into the practices that enable young adults to live faithfully in uncertain times.[114] Thus, emerging adults need mentors but especially those who are actively practicing, modeling, and teaching the spiritual disciplines. Mentoring that is rooted in these disciplines empowers young adults to nurture habits that lead to a well-developed character, a robust spirituality, and contributes to the flourishing of the larger Church.

At this point the reader should note that there is nuance between the definitions of "Christian practices" and "spiritual disciplines." Christian practices serve as an umbrella term for

[112] Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 74, Kindle.
[113] Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2010), xiii.
[114] Bass, 4-5.

the breadth and depth of ordinary life, its rituals, and routines, all of which have the potential to embed believers more deeply into the life of faith. The term refers to an overarching way of life, indeed a "way of life abundant" as mentioned above, whereby each of us discerns, with God's help, how to live faithfully within our specific contexts and particular moment in history.[115] The spiritual disciplines, however, are typically rooted in specific religious traditions. For example, evangelical churches tend to emphasize the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Scripture study while Catholic orders often focus more on contemplative practices such as silence, solitude, and spiritual direction. Liturgical denominations emphasize corporate disciplines like confession and liturgical prayer while mainline traditions lean into more service-oriented disciplines such as compassion and creation care. In recent years the spiritual disciplines have become disconnected from specific traditions and are now viewed as a corpus of time-honored behaviors and postures which enable Christian believers to intentionally partner with the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus. And although the terms "Christian practices" and "spiritual disciplines" are used interchangeably here, the definition will default primarily to spiritual disciplines as outlined above.

Ultimately, this chapter is keen to point out that while prayer, Scripture study, worship, and other disciplines widely used in corporate and individual settings need not be ignored, the mentor who is working with young adults should be aware of several less prominent disciplines that address the unique concerns of this age group. These disciplines are hospitality, testimony, honoring the body, and discernment/examen. Each is described at length below, including how each discipline is employed in the mentoring relationship. Further, the disciplines are presented in a specific order as each builds upon the other. *Hospitality* creates the initial foundation for the

[115] Bass, *Practicing our Faith*, xiii.

relationship between mentor and mentee, forging it in a spirit of openness and vulnerability. As the mentor takes the role of host welcoming the mentee into their emotional, spiritual, relational, and physical space, the mentee enters an increasingly safe environment where they can speak honestly and truly be heard. Once hospitality creates a firm footing for relationship, *testimony* then allows the mentor and mentee to explore each other's sacred stories at a much richer level, opening the mentee to deeper levels of growth and transformation. Conversations around *honoring the body* necessarily require a high level of trust among mentor and mentee, and, thus, the relational scaffolding created by the prior practices of hospitality and testimony allows for a deep level of authenticity around this delicate issue of how the mentee views their body and its connection to their spirituality. Finally, the practices of *discernment and examen* keep mentor and mentee attuned to the work of the Spirit in their conversations and gatherings throughout the duration of their relationship.

Hospitality: Building Trust

Hospitality holds primacy on this list as it lays the foundation upon which the mentor/mentee relationship is built. It provides the framework or "green space" for the other three disciplines to be practiced effectively and with grace. In recent decades, green spaces have become popular in areas of urban and suburban sprawl because they reintegrate nature into landscapes dominated by buildings and cement. Green spaces provide much needed places for recreation and play, places of respite for those harried by the fast pace of city and suburban life. Thus, green space is an apt metaphor for what happens when hospitality is practiced in the context of the mentoring relationship. It creates a welcoming and safe space for rest, play, restored physical, mental, emotional, spiritual health and more.

Although the discipline of hospitality has traditionally been conceived to meet basic human needs, its ability to become a portal to "a way of life abundant" for both mentor and mentee cannot be overstated. Dr. Christine Pohl, who writes extensively about the history and practice of communal hospitality, nevertheless, makes many points of connection with this discipline as it relates to effective mentoring. She argues the Early Church viewed the discipline foremost in terms of sharing life together.[116] Her research among modern-day practitioners confirms that they too envision hospitality in this way: "Practitioners view hospitality as a sacred practice and find God is especially present in guest/host relationships. There is a mutual blessing in hospitality; practitioners consistently comment that they receive more than they give."[117] Therefore, when true hospitality is extended, much more than food and drink is offered and received. God's very presence is evoked, and the door to deep connection is opened.

Importantly, Scripture emphasizes the crucial importance of this spiritual discipline. For the Israelites, the God of the Old Testament is One who extends hospitality to them in a myriad of ways. A common set of metaphors Israel uses to describe herself in Scripture is that of sojourner, immigrant, and guest. In essence Israel is a people "whose existence is sustained by God's hospitality."[118] For example, when Abraham diligently offers hospitality to three strangers (Genesis 18), one of those strangers ends up bringing the long-awaited news of Isaac's birth. God appears as table host to the Israelites too, providing manna and quail as they are making their way to the Promised Land (Exodus 16). God is also depicted as the provider of sustenance throughout the psalms including the beloved twenty third Psalm.

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[116] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 72.
[117] Pohl, *Making Room*, 13.
[118] Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 2017), 143.

The theme of hospitality persists in the New Testament as well. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is often portrayed as the guest at a meal – with the hospitality of the host (or lack of) an indication of whether they experience God's blessing.[119] Jesus is also depicted as host in a variety of texts from the feeding of the multitudes to the Emmaus Road where Jesus reveals himself as the risen Christ during a meal. In Acts, the New Testament Church embodies a robust ethos of hospitality, too, inviting every economic demographic to the table for food, fellowship, and the Lord's Supper. And the apostle Paul portrays Jesus as table host in First Corinthians. As Joshua Jipp notes in *Saved By Faith and Hospitality* "one powerful and central image Paul sets forth is that of the risen Lord as the divine host who presides over a sacred and celebratory meal that binds the host (the risen Lord) and the guest (the Corinthian Church) together as a sacred family."[120] In short, the New Testament mandates we extend God's hospitality to others, a hospitality primarily revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.[121]

In our increasingly divided and disconnected world, a scriptural practice of hospitality proves critical, for at its core, hospitality provides the path to shared life and deep connectivity. Christine Pohl underscores our modern dilemma when she writes: "We, like the early church, find ourselves in a fragmented and multicultural society that yearns for relationships, identity, and meaning. Our mobile and self-oriented society is characterized by disturbing levels of loneliness, alienation, and estrangement."[122] When practiced in the context of mentoring then, hospitality provides an antidote to the fragmentation that permeates much of our present culture.

Additionally, the practice of hospitality creates safe conversational and emotional space for young adults to wonder, doubt, argue, and dream. In her work focused on the faith formation

[119] Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 6.
[120] Jipp, 55.
[121] Jipp, 92.
[122] Pohl, *Making Room*, 33.

of emerging adults, Sharon Daloz Parks argues that young adults must feel safe to ask questions and know that they will be taken seriously, sometimes challenged, but never cast out of the circle of support and belonging.[123] Thus, the regular practice of hospitality makes room for young persons to openly and honestly re-evaluate the faith handed down to them while providing safe space to recalibrate that faith in new, vibrant, and more sustainable ways.[124]

While providing green space for young adults to ask tough questions about faith is important, offering green space to process suffering and pain is also necessary. Daloz Parks suggests a helpful template using the progressive concepts of "shipwreck, gladness and amazement." Originally articulated by theologian Richard Niebuhr, Daloz Parks uses these movements to capture the notion of a second naivete that young adults experience when they commit to reflecting upon their own pain. With the mentor sitting at the center of this process as empathetic listener and guide, contemplating the shipwrecks of a mentee's life can lead to a firmer, more adequate faith and a new kind of knowing: "… an embracing, complex kind of knowing that is experienced as a more trustworthy understanding of reality in both beauty and terror."[125] When all is said and done, young adults want to know if their way of making meaning is adequate and dependable.[126] They want to know if their view of the world is accurate or skewed. They want to know if what has happened to them has value. Therefore, processing the big life questions, but also the big life hurts, in a hospitable, nurturing, mentored environment leads to a more sustainable life and faith – one that is ultimately characterized by true gladness, joy, and even amazement.

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[123] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2000), 203.
[124] Daloz Parks, 8.
[125] Daloz Parks, 30.
[126] Daloz Parks, 14.

Furthermore, the metaphor of *host* illuminates the preparation work every mentor needs to attend to as they engage in the discipline of hospitality for a host who can effectively offer refuge to a needy traveler must have their own house in order first. In *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction,* Margaret Guenther turns the spotlight on the host specifically, offering this challenge: "… we must clean our house, and then keep cleaning it so that we have a worthy place when we invite others to rest and refreshment."[127] In other words, the host/mentor must be regularly attentive to their own inner work and the practice of the spiritual disciplines if they hope to offer anything of value to their guest. They must cast off the trappings of their false self and approach the relationship with an accurate perception of themselves, their gifts and, most importantly, their belovedness in God's eyes. [128] In the end, it is only when the host accepts these truths about themselves that they are able to accept, honor, and welcome the other fully and practice hospitality at a meaningful level. The result is a relationship of deep acceptance and love as both host and guest embrace the image of God in each other.[129]

Being a good host also means giving one's full self to the other in deep, attentive, selfless listening. This necessarily means giving up control of the "terms and direction of the conversation."[130] Young people are longing to be heard. They spend lots of money on therapy each year which often boils down to finding someone to simply listen to them. It is why so many emerging adults seek out mentors. They want their questions and doubts to be heard, considered, and contemplated by older, wiser adults. Therefore, in the mentoring relationship, listening is at

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[127] Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* (Boston, MA: Cowley Publications, 1992), 11.
[128] Nanette Sawyer, *Hospitality – The Sacred Art: Discovering the Hidden Spiritual Power of Invitation and Welcome* (Woodstock, Vermont: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2008), 4.
[129] Sawyer, 4.
[130] Adam S. McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 22.

the heart of true hospitality. As good hosts, mentors commit to being "story-hearers" first for it is only when we truly hear another's story that we can help change and transform it.

Additionally, it is important for mentors to recognize that they will find themselves in the role of storyteller and guest from time to time too. Mentees benefit from the life wisdom, experience, and faith journey of their mentors. Young adults want to hear these stories, to learn and grow from them; therefore, mentors should be generous in sharing them, taking the role of storyteller and vulnerable guest when appropriate. Happily, practicing hospitality in this way often leads to "reverse mentoring" which is one of the delightful benefits of engaging in this good work. Reverse mentoring happens when the mentor allows the mentee to become host. It happens when mentors put themselves in a position to gratefully receive their mentee's words of wisdom, inspiration, and challenge in turn.

In sum, hospitality lays the foundation for a strong relationship to be built between mentor and mentee by providing a safe environment in which a mentee is truly welcomed and heard. Hospitable mentors create welcoming, safe, green spaces where honesty and acceptance are the norm. As a result, loneliness is alleviated, a sense of belonging is cultivated, important questions are asked, and emotional, relational, and spiritual growth occurs. Ultimately, hospitality opens the door for both mentor and mentee to explore each other's sacred stories—*their testimonies*—at much deeper levels of authenticity, openness, and trust.

Giving Testimony: Telling and Writing Our Stories in Community

As mentioned in the previous chapter, by remembering, rehearsing, and retelling our own individual stories—that is, giving testimony—we remind ourselves and each other when and where God shows up in our own lives. Importantly, the larger biblical narrative that we give

testimony to when the Body gathers for worship and study reminds us of the myriad ways God shows up in history to act on behalf of God's people.[131] For our Jewish forebears in the faith, the Exodus story is central to how they view life and liturgy. For the Church, the narrative of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection shapes the liturgical seasons and life rhythms of believers. Thankfully, grace, liberation, new life, and hope are inextricably woven into both storylines. These larger biblical narratives then become the umbrella under which our own individual testimonies of grace, liberation, new life, and hope fall.

Although the practice of giving testimony has negative connotations for some and is infrequently practiced in many churches, its spiritually formative power cannot be dismissed, especially in the context of mentoring. In *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*, Dr. Thomas Long concedes that with so much bad and harmful "God talk" happening in our culture today, many Christians are tempted to focus on good works and action alone. The familiar adage attributed to St. Francis, *Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary use words,* has gained traction with emerging adults weary of the inadequate and wounding words of an institutionalized Church tarnished by abuse scandals, inappropriate political allegiances and more. Yet, Long still argues "There are times when words are called for, when actions alone are not complete and only a word will do."[132]

Thus, when we give testimony, we are not claiming our words are fully adequate to address all the experiences and struggles of life but rather affirming we can and do see God at work. Long explains: "We just want to give them the same gift that has been given to us over and

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[131] Andrew Root, *The Pastor in a Secular Age: Ministry to People Who No Longer Need a God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2019, 202.

[132] Thomas G. Long, *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2004), 25.

over. When life is ablaze with the glory of God, what else can we do but say, 'Look, look!'"[133] When mentoring young adults, this kind of vibrant, life-giving testimony is key for it allows the mentor's own life experiences to point the mentee toward a hopeful future. The mentor's testimony allows the mentee to borrow hope and joy from the past, so that the mentee is fortified with the strength and perseverance they need for the challenges they face both in the present and in the future. And as already noted in chapter 2, the unique life and faith stories shared by both mentor and mentee eventually become the primary curriculum God uses for the mentee's growth and maturity.[134]

The spiritual practice of giving testimony also strengthens the faith of the larger community as it helps congregants, especially youth and young adults, learn to talk confidently about their experiences with God, In her insightful book, *Saying Is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development*, Amanda Hontz Drury makes a compelling case for the critical role that testimony plays in developing and deepening the Christian faith of youth.[135] She alludes to her own experience growing up in a church that encouraged and gave space for testimony. She believes these testimonies were not simply a rehearsal of past events but stories that had the power to change both speaker and listener: "My community [helped] train my eyes to see where God [was] at work in my life. My community [helped] supply my mouth with language to narrate these experiences. And my community [provided] me with a framework in which I might interpret these experiences."[136] In short, the regular practice of giving and

[133] Long, *Testimony*, 120.
[134] Reese and Loane, *Deep Mentoring,* loc 790, Kindle.
[135] Amanda Hontz Drury, *Saying is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2015), 19.
[136] Drury, 67.

receiving testimony in our churches and beyond enables believers of all ages to learn the language of faith, especially emerging adults.

Unfortunately, this faith language largely goes unspoken in churches where testimony has fallen out of favor or use. As a result, most emerging adults are far from fluent and have adopted the language of the larger culture instead: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (God will respond when we are in trouble or have a need but will not require anything from us like faithfulness or devotion). Thus, young adults don't know how to talk about God or their spiritual experiences in meaningful ways and are heading into the turbulent years of emerging adulthood without the language they need to root themselves long-term in their faith, much less the Church.[137]

Happily, at its core, mentoring is about story—storytelling and "story-hearing"—and thus fertile ground for young people to acquire this faith language through the spiritual practice of giving and receiving testimony. The mentor tells their own faith story when helpful and appropriate but, more importantly, bears witness to the mentee's story, identifying the places where God shows up and affirming how God is at work. In narrative terms, the mentor helps the mentee trace the plot line and major themes of their story as well as interpret the importance of the events that have led to growth and maturity or to regression and malformation.[138] The mentor also enables the mentee to identify the main characters and chief antagonists in their story, all the while discerning with the mentee who should play a larger or lesser role going forward. Thus, by sharing their stories of joy and sorrow, success and failure with trusted mentors, young adults are empowered to grow, mature, and write the next chapter of their lives.[139]

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[137] Drury, *Saying is Believing*, 28.
[138] Keith R. Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story: An Invitation to Spiritual Mentoring* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), loc 221, Kindle.
[139] Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, loc 1148, Kindle.

It should be further noted that a significant benefit of this discipline is it prevents both mentor and mentee from trusting in their own subjectivity. In giving testimony mentor and mentee find resonance with each other's stories but also with the story of the larger Church. Giving testimony challenges both mentor and mentee to compare their truth, as they see and experience it, with the truth of the historic Christian faith and adjust when necessary. In essence, the giving and receiving of testimony is a practice that "closes the circle," for young adults.[140] The mentoring relationship provides a safe place for the mentee to test drive their testimony, its veracity and sustainability, but also refine it in ongoing dialogue. In the process, the mentee's faith is bolstered as their confidence in the larger story of God grows and is more firmly rooted.[141]

By inviting a trusted mentor into their personal and spiritual stories through the spiritual discipline of giving testimony, the mentee takes the risk of allowing someone to really know and challenge them as well as move them in meaningful ways towards transformation.[142] Meanwhile, the mentor is privileged to provide a hospitable, loving, and safe place for the mentee's story (testimony) to be honestly written, rewritten, and regularly celebrated. And once a relationship of deep trust is established by the telling, writing, and rewriting of these stories in community the mentoring relationship is poised to delve into the more delicate territory of honoring the body.

Honoring the Body: Connecting the Whole Person to the Mentoring Task

[140] Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 121.
[141] Daloz Parks, 121.
[142] Dan Allender, *To Be Told: God Invites You to Coauthor Your Future* (Colorado Springs, CO; Waterbrook Press, 1996), 139.

Although creation, incarnation, and resurrection describe three of the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith, time and again, the Church communicates conflicting messages about the goodness and purpose of the human body. All this despite the creation account which assures us we are fashioned in God's own image (Genesis 1), despite the witness of the New Testament that tells us God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, and despite our singular belief in Christ's victory over death through his bodily resurrection. Unfortunately, we Christians repeatedly dismiss and distance ourselves from "the idea that this uncomfortable, sweaty, noisy, unruly body of ours might indeed the vehicle for union with the God who loves us beyond anything we could imagine."[143] In sum, our theological heritage in this area cripples us.

Examples of this deformed theology of the body abound. Gnosticism offers one example. This belief that spiritual things are superior to the material/the body was widespread in the Ancient Near East. Unfortunately, gnostic ideas prevail in many churches even today. Augustine further muddies the waters with his coupling of sin and sexuality. He sets the stage for a long-standing repressive view of the human body in Christian theology and practice, especially women's bodies which remain a target of criticism and oppression today. Women's bodies are largely viewed as the locus of sensual temptation from which the male gaze must be shielded.[144] Needless to say, we are poorly served by a Church that says too little about the body or actively tries to repress it. Therefore, a robust theology of the body necessitates we embrace the bedrock assertion that we don't just *have* bodies but *are* bodies.

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[143] Tara M. Owens, *Embracing the Body: Finding God in our Flesh and Bone* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 16.

[144] Lilian Calles Barger, *Eve's Revenge: Women and a Spirituality of the Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, a division of Baker Book House Company, 2003), 35.

But it is not just the Church that is at fault, our cultural narrative is crippling us too. In *The Wisdom of Your Body,* Hilary McBride's research reveals that up to 90% of people living in a Western cultural context report loathing their bodies. Discontent has become normative, she writes: "We've been taught to see our bodies as objects, as appearances to evaluate."[145] Through relentless advertising we are daily urged to pursue the ideal body and indoctrinated into a warped and unrealistic view of beauty. Women in particular remain susceptible to this siren song. They provide the target market for a certain construct of beauty which compels them to "spend more money, time, and personal anguish every year in the quest to measure up to unattainable standards."[146] Women's bodies are also far more objectified and sexualized in the media, all of which has profound implications for women's spiritual lives. Author, historian, and cultural critic Lilian Calles Barger contends that, at the core, women's relentless pursuit of beauty reveals a repressed and visceral search for transcendence:

> "... the search for the transcendent has derailed into a focus on the body. The pursuit of physical beauty has swallowed up the pursuit of transcendent beauty. This prevents the body from fulfilling its true spiritual role of pointing us to God ... This gulf between inner beauty and outer beauty is at the center of our dis-integrity. The need to atone for our body's shortcomings keep us kneeling in appeasement before false idols as we seek to extract transcendent meaning from them."[147]

The relentless pursuit of our culture's ideal of physical beauty is indeed an elusive and ultimately unachievable goal. It only serves to move us further and further away from the meaning, significance, and inner beauty that we truly desire as God's beloved – women especially. [148]

The good work of mentoring then necessarily includes disentangling emerging adults from these destructive Church and cultural narratives. It means helping each mentee reconstruct

[145] McBride, *The Wisdom of Your Body,* 7.
[146] Barger, *Eve's Revenge*, 18.
[147] Barger, 34.
[148] Barger, 30.

a healthy and holistic view of spiritual formation and the body. It means practicing a spiritual discipline of honoring the body. Thankfully, as mentioned above, we have foundational doctrines to guide us. The creation narrative reminds us we are made in the image of God. Although we are anchored to the earth and the temporal, we are nevertheless the channels through which God chooses to work and usher in God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.[149] The incarnation also vividly reminds us that God chooses the human body of Jesus in which to demonstrate God's full and complete nature. In fact, it is the very means by which Jesus relates to and heals others.[150] Further, Jesus' bodily resurrection is the very locus of our redemption.[151] It is also how his Church grows, as his disciples, both then and now, spread "the healing presence of Jesus in the world" with our bodies. [152]

Considering these truths, mentors need to take time with their mentees to consider their bodies, how they feel about them and how they move in this world with them. As already alluded to above, an important first step is to recognize that our endless pursuit of beauty and a sexualized ideal is a misplaced desire for transcendence. In her book *Mothers, Daughter & Body Image: Learning to Love Ourselves as We Are,* McBride argues there is a strong tie between a healthy body image and a deeply rooted spirituality. The women in her study who declined to follow the cultural script are those who had a positive and loving relationship with their bodies.[153] These women refused to determine their worth by their looks or their ability to attract men and instead "believed they were loved and valued, known personally and intimately, by their Creator in a way that transcended their appearance and actually satisfied their deepest

[149] Barger, *Eve's Revenge*, 142.
[150] Barger, 53.
[151] Barger, 170.
[152] Barger, 181.
[153] Hilary L. McBride, *Mothers, Daughter & Body Image: Learning to Love Ourselves As We Are* (Post Hill Press: Nashville: TN, 2017), 154.

longings."[154] In light of her research, McBride urges the Church to embrace a better definition of beauty—one not dependent on the cultural adjectives of "young" and "thin" but rather defined by how we exude beauty when the Divine resides in us.

Ultimately, practicing this spiritual discipline of honoring the body in the mentoring context gives credence to the holistic nature of the spiritual life which Christian doctrine has always embraced. This discipline gives hospitable space and room for mentees, women especially, to rediscover their true beauty and value in God's eyes as well as the world around them. As Barger counsels: "Instead of seeing the body as an encumbrance in our drive for meaning, we must learn to listen to the body as a moral space; to recognize its voice and affirm its life."[155] Simply put, our bodies are how we encounter God in time and space. They are the bridge to connection and intimacy with others. Thus, we cannot ignore or dismiss them but must recognize them as undeniably connected to our spiritual formation and growth.

It must be noted here that body issues, body image, sexuality and even abuse (physical or sexual) are challenging topics to address in any relationship, much less the mentoring context. Thus, the spiritual discipline of honoring the body must be handled with great care. It cannot be practiced without the foundation of a healthy and trusting relationship between mentor and mentee which the disciplines of hospitality and testimony help establish. Further, the degree to which this discipline is practiced in the mentoring context depends on the goals of the mentor/mentee, the longevity of the relationship, and gender dynamics. However, in the highly sexualized culture in which emerging adults are steeped and considering the malformed messages they receive from both the culture and the Church, this discipline cannot be

[154] McBride, *Mothers, Daughter & Body Image*, 154.
[155] Barger, *Eve's Revenge*, 27.

overlooked. The mentor must be prepared to practice it whether the mentee is struggling with beauty, body image, forging their sexual ethic, or dealing with physical or sexual abuse.

In *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice*, Dr. Stephanie Paulsell sums up what a positive practice of this discipline looks like in the mentoring context when she writes: "This is our task ... to learn to see our bodies and the bodies of others through the eyes of God. To learn to see the body as both fragile and deeply blessed. To remember the body's vulnerability and to rejoice in the body as a sign of God's gracious bounty."[156] Happily, a hospitable mentoring relationship rooted in sacred story can bear the weight of such an important and necessary task.

Thus far the disciplines of hospitality, giving testimony, and honoring the body have built upon each other, laying a strong foundation for a meaningful mentoring relationship to be built between mentor and mentee. We now turn to discernment and examen which are necessary companions. They serve as the container in which these other spiritual disciplines operate, keeping mentor and mentee attuned to the movement and work of the Spirit in their relationship.

Discernment and Examen: Learning to Listen to the Voice of the Spirit

From Father Abraham to the Apostle Paul, Scripture erupts with stories of direct, personal encounters with God. God tells Abraham and Sarah to leave their home and travel to a new land of promise. A few chapters later, God assures the distraught runaway Hagar that God hears and sees her. In Exodus, God speaks to Moses amidst a burning bush and commands him to set the Israelites free. Time and again the prophets hear directly from God as well. In the New

[156] Stephanie Paulsell, *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* (Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, 2002), 34.

Testament God appears in the person of Jesus Christ but also in spectacular fashion on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit arrives on the scene. God's Spirit also appears to the Gentiles when God dispatches Peter to the home of Cornelius the centurion in Acts. The apostle Paul's lightning bolt conversion is well known too, not to mention the direct words and visions he receives from God throughout his life and ministry. In sum, direct personal encounters with God are the norm in Scripture. Yet the modern-day believer steeped in a rationalistic, Enlightenment mindset and bereft of such encounters still asks: does God speak today? And if so, how can I hear God?

These and other questions require the spiritual discipline of discernment. A wise, discerning spirit is a critical attribute for anyone wishing to mentor young adults. At this stage in their life, young adults seek clarity about many life-altering decisions from the career they pursue to the person they marry. Amid these decisions, discerning mentors remind mentees that God did indeed speak in the past and still speaks today. Further, wise mentors help mentees delineate the voice of God from the myriad of other voices competing for their attention during a time of tremendous disruption in their lives.[157] In short, the discerning mentor teaches the mentee how to hear God.

However, it must be said that not many of us are naturally born with the skills to discern well and must, therefore, train ourselves and others wisely. Discernment, like the other disciplines above, is a learned art.[158] First, the art of discernment requires a steadfast commitment to one's own spiritual growth and emotional maturity.[159] It also requires a deep dependence on

[157] Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer, and the Witness of the Spirit* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 13.
[158] Gordon T. Smith, 19.
[159] Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing A Conversational Relationship with God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 29.

God's written Word for, if we take the Bible seriously, we can look with confidence to the experiences of others in Scripture for clues to what we ourselves can expect.[160] Finally, discernment necessitates we actively participate in God's good work here on earth. In *Hearing God: Developing A Conversational Relationship with God*, Dallas Willard reminds us that "In many cases our need to wonder about or be told what God wants in a certain situation is nothing short of a clear indication of how little we are engaged in (God's) work."[161] Thus, we mature in our ability to discern when we are committed to our own spiritual growth, rooted in God's Word, and active in God's kingdom work.

Further, we do not throw away our intellectual abilities when practicing discernment nor do we let our rational, scientific minds override all else. For the Christian, both mind and heart must figure into the decision-making process. In the Catholic tradition, St. Ignatius is a great example of one who balances the rational with the affective when it comes to discernment.[162] He believes God embeds certain unique desires and passions within each of us that we need to pay attention to when making decisions. Ignatius argues that we must attend to timing as well. He warns us never to make a decision when in a state of *desolation*, struggling to experience God's presence: "we can choose well only when we choose from a fundamental posture of faith and trust in God.[163] Times of *consolation* then, when we sense God's presence, deep peace, and joy, are ideal times to make major life decisions.

We depend on the larger community of faith to hone our discernment skills too. We do not do this work of listening alone or in an echo chamber of like-minded people. We humans are easily deceived and depend on a wider network of relationships to hear the voice of Jesus

[160] Willard, 35.
[161] Willard, *Hearing God*, 55.
[162] Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus*, 39.
[163] Gordon T. Smith, 139.

correctly. John Wesley knew this truth well. His deep commitment to accountability through his network of small groups remind us that we are dependent on the wisdom of others and the larger traditions of the Church. Further, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral reminds us that our best decisions are informed and bounded not only by Scripture but also Church tradition, reason, and the experiences of ourselves and others. Thus, a wise mentor considers all these factors when leading a mentee through a time of significant decision-making. What follows is a description of the specific practice of *examen* which undergirds the work and discipline of discernment.

Examen: The Benefit of the Specific Practice in the Mentoring Context

The practice of examen appears in subtle biblical passages like Genesis 45 when Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. Here Joseph realizes that his long journey of tragedy and imprisonment has, ultimately, resulted in good for his family, and for an entire nation. The disciples on the road to Emmaus also engage in an extended examen of Scripture with their unusual travel companion who is eventually revealed as Jesus when he breaks the bread at their evening meal. In Acts, the headstrong, gaffe-prone Peter emerges as chief among the disciples on the day of Pentecost when he puts all the puzzle pieces of Jesus' life and ministry together in his Acts 2 speech which is essentially an examination of the faithfulness of God over time, culminating in the gift of Jesus.

In short, examen is the intentional act of regular reflection to discover when and how God shows up on any given day or season in one's life. It is both a simple and complex practice. Complex because paying attention to the ordinary moments of one's life contradicts all the things our larger culture focuses on—the extraordinary, the glamorous and the dramatic.[164] The typical

[164] Anderson, *Reading Your Life's Story*, loc 609, Kindle.

young adult who is steeped in a social media environment founded on these principles is not easily convinced of the spiritual power of the mundane. Yet, this is the good and hard work of the mentor, helping the mentee pay attention to their daily life. The five-step process popularized by St. Ignatius is as follows:

1. Become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
5. Look toward tomorrow.

Although there are variations of the practice, the examen invites the faithful believer to reflect on their life intentionally and regularly to find God at work in it.

In narrative terms, the practice of examen enables mentees to read their stories backward, to reflect on them, and to discover both God and meaning in them.[165] For example, the examen helps put suffering into perspective. As Genesis 45 illustrates, God's purposes are not always immediately recognizable in the moment; in retrospect, Joseph's suffering positively shapes his character and results in tremendous good. Thus, when used in the mentoring context, the practice of examen enables mentees to see God at work in their lives whether it be times of joy, sorrow, success, or failure. The practice of the examen reveals how all of it can be turning points in the formational journey.[166] In sum, the practice of examen enables the mentor to interpret the events in a young person's life in conversation with God's character and ultimate purposes.

Conclusion

[165] Allender, *To Be Told*, 10.

[166] Angela H. Reed, *Quest for Spiritual Community: Reclaiming Spiritual Guidance for Contemporary Congregations* (New York, NY: T&T Clark International 2011), 131.

The spiritual vitality of both mentor and mentee depends on the regular practice of the disciplines. Under-rated, overlooked and even novel disciplines like hospitality, giving testimony, and honoring the body should be reconsidered as vital to the long-term efficacy of the mentoring relationship. Further, following the example of the Early Church, mentoring that is grounded in these life-giving spiritual disciplines can contribute to more than just the spiritual maturity of the individual mentee. It can become the foundation for a renewed vibrancy among a whole generation of young people disenchanted with a Church focused on enlisting in models of ministry that emphasize what a person does rather than who they are. Indeed, mentoring that is rooted in the practice of the spiritual disciplines can equip the Church to guide dislocated young people in need of healing and hope toward a way of life abundant—all of which has the potential to create new life within the Church's own doors as well. The specific means for doing this is through a retreat designed to train and prepare older adults to mentor as outlined in the next chapter. It is a retreat that deeply integrates each of the spiritual disciplines discussed above and enables novices to build both their skill and confidence as they embark on the mentoring journey.

A Retreat Model for the Novice, Faint of Heart and Intimidated

Introduction to the Retreat

In my years of pastoral ministry, mentoring occurred in a variety of contexts. It happened formally when working with ministry students or young clergy in their first years of service with a prescribed set of objectives to be achieved within a certain time frame. But, just as often, mentoring happened informally when young people sought me out as an invested conversation partner to help them process life, work, faith, and more. This artifact represents my desire to create a template that prepares and guides mentors who find themselves in either setting.

When I transitioned from the pastorate to a Seminary administrative post, I had the opportunity to create a three-year, retreat-based mentoring cohort for young clergy in their first years in ministry. The retreat structure focused on helping new clergy build their pastoral skills, forge their pastoral identity, and root themselves in regular spiritual formation practices over the course of three years. A team of seasoned ministry leaders anchored the retreat structure, not only planning and executing the retreats but also meeting with participants in smaller, monthly mentoring meetings outside the retreat times.

The artifact below serves as the outgrowth of all these experiences, my research above, and demonstrates my ongoing commitment to effective and generative mentoring. The retreat is uniquely designed to equip and encourage inexperienced adults who wish to mentor young people but don't know where to start. The breadth of the work introduces untried mentors to the key disciplines enumerated in chapter 3, providing ample opportunity to practice them in real time. Further, the retreat and follow up materials give would-be mentors concrete handles on how to initiate a relationship with a young adult and maintain it at greater and greater levels of

authenticity with each other and with God. Ultimately, the retreat engenders confidence in adults who doubt their ability to serve as mentors as well as provide a road map for how to get started.

Since a robust practice of the spiritual disciplines is critical in any mentoring relationship, the disciplines are the foundational activities participants engage in during their retreat time. The four critical disciplines of hospitality, giving testimony, honoring the body, and discernment/examen appear in a specific sequence enabling the necessary relationship "scaffolding" to happen between mentor and mentee as they progressively journey into deeper levels of trust and understanding.

Why a Retreat?

A retreat is the recommended delivery method for this material for several significant reasons. First and foremost, a retreat offers busy, harried persons an intentional and circumscribed time for rest and spiritual reflection. They give participants the opportunity to get away in order to become more present to God, to others and the created world.[167] Retreats take persons out of the normal routines and demands of life, giving space for God to recalibrate their priorities and values. They also enlarge our perspectives, enabling us to see the world in a new way. They open our minds and hearts to new dreams, new possibilities.[168] Finally, well-planned retreats nurture and strengthen our faith and, in turn, build up the larger ministry of the Church.[169]

Secondly, retreats are a space where community is quickly formed and at a deep level. In Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt's *The Retreat Leader's Manual: A Complete Guide to*

[167] Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual: A Complete Guide to Organizing Meaningful Christian Retreats* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 16.
[168] Joan Garry, "10 Creative Ideas for Nonprofit Staff Retreats," *Joan Garry Consulting: Because Non-Profits are Messy* https://blog.joangarry.com/creative-staff-retreats/.
[169] Ferguson and Witt, 9.

Organizing Meaningful Christian Retreats, one faithful parishioner tells the authors she learned more about her fellow congregants in one twenty-four-hour retreat than she had attending her church for fifteen years.[170] Retreats, therefore, create time and space for participants to connect in much more meaningful and enduring ways than a typical church setting, especially as everyone focuses on a common goal. For the specific purpose of mentoring, a retreat setting gives nascent mentors the opportunity to network with others who are on the same journey and build a community of support and confidence for the work that lies ahead.

A third reason why a retreat provides the recommended context for training young adult mentors is that most retreat centers are in areas where nature trails and other outdoor activities abound. Creation helps us get in touch with the larger God story in which our individual stories are located. And by being attentive to the created world, we better understand God's loving character and loving desire for the whole world—including the beloved creatures we mentor.[171]

Lastly, retreats give participants the opportunity to move beyond simple content consumption to true holistic formation. Far too many churches emphasize the intellectual nature of Christianity. From the sermon to Sunday school to Bible study, the faith is often taught primarily with the mind and intellect in view. Yet faith is about far more than information or knowledge. A robust and durable faith must also be "caught" through various experiences and formational practices that engage all the senses. Thus, a retreat methodology with a focus on both content and formational experiences (i.e., a variety of activities and a high level of interaction among participants) is the most enduring method for true change to occur for, ultimately, a retreat is not about getting things done but shaping who we are becoming.[172]

[170] Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 9.
[171] Ferguson and Witt, 37.
[172] Jean Vennard, *Be Still: Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats* (Durham, NC: An Alban Institute Publication, 2000), preface, x.

Preparation for the Retreat

The most important question to ask before hosting a retreat is who should come? A strategy for creating a mentoring culture needs to be in place before such a training event is planned and offered. Times of prayerful discernment by church leaders as well as the whole church are recommended first steps. Pastors and lay leaders are wise to step back and "tend the soul of their institutions"[173] before embarking on a retreat or small group experience. Additionally, smaller churches with limited (mentor) recruiting pools should consider collaborating with other like-minded churches geographically or denominationally to achieve critical mass at a retreat (12-15 participants). Questions that serve as prayer focal points include:

- Where have we missed the mark with our children, youth, young adults when it comes to character and spiritual formation?
- Where, when, and how have our young people gotten lost in transition from childhood to youth to emerging adult?
- What current structures in our church serve our youth well and which do not?
- What new methods might God be calling us to employ to build long-lasting relationships and friendships with our young people?
- How can we effectively identify and meaningfully employ the gifts of our kids, youth, and young adults in ministry both inside and outside the church?
- Can we identify specific persons in our congregation who are particularly gifted and able to engage in the work of mentoring?

In sum, pastors and church leaders need to sit in a space of deep discernment before starting a formal mentoring initiative or hosting a training event like the one described below.

Second, if handled strategically and with care, sermon series, formal and informal teaching, spiritual gifts training and more can help lay a foundation for a culture of mentoring to develop in faith communities.

[173] Susan Beaumont, *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season* (Lanham, MD: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2019), loc 44, Kindle.

Third, once a core group of potential mentors is identified, a retreat should be planned, and participants required to read the primer above (chapters 1-3) so they can enter the experience with the necessary background information. Also, persons should be invited to the retreat with the understanding that it is yet another step in the discernment process. For some, the retreat, along with the feedback of their fellow attendees, will affirm their gifts, graces, and passions to serve as a mentor to young adults. Others will discover this is not the right ministry fit or the right time to engage in the work.

Finally, the timing of the retreat itself should be carefully considered so that mentors, once trained, can act on what they have learned. A summer mentor training at a church near a college campus, for example, is ideal as mentors could be prepared to connect with returning students when the new academic year begins.

Once the "who" is determined, the actual content and structure of the retreat needs to include several key components beginning with the foundational posture of hospitality. Hospitality remains one of the central disciplines that mentors must practice when working with young adults. As such, the entire framework of a training retreat for mentors should be rooted in this discipline. This includes the hospitality extended to participants even before they arrive.[174] For example, retreat leaders need to ensure persons are well informed about everything from the registration process to the schedule, to what to bring/pack, to the food plan, cost and more. Such attention to detail helps reduce anxiety and builds confidence in those leading the event.

Hospitality extends to the physical environment participants enter as well. Retreat attendees should feel relaxed in the gathering spaces at the actual site. Good lighting, comfortable seating and ample space are all critical. Sleeping quarters should be conducive to

[174] Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 62.

each person's needs too. Individual room assignments are best as this allows for times of uninterrupted reflection and contemplation, especially if this is not an option for the participants back home. A conducive retreat space should also include sufficient opportunity for attendees to get outside, explore nature and connect with God through creation. Finally, good, and healthy food makes for a positive experience, nourishing not only the body but the soul.

The most important dimension of hospitality in any retreat setting entails the creation of safe emotional space for the participants. Every person needs to know from the start that he/she can speak honestly, is accepted, and belongs. Appropriate and targeted conversation starters, for example, help put people at ease and prime the pump for meaningful conversation throughout the retreat. Establishing clear guidelines for the group process and group sharing goes a long way as well in helping to create an atmosphere of comfort and closeness among participants. Incorporating ample small group time within the retreat structure also gives quieter persons the chance to speak.

Attentiveness to the whole person is also crucial. Introductory exercises that help ground body, mind and spirit are key—times of silence and prayer, for example. Simple exercises to relax the body are helpful too. Even the most basic breathing exercises make a difference for those entering the retreat with anxiety or tension. In sum, grounding attendees in an appreciative, hospitable relationship with their bodies is a critical part of a holistic approach to the retreat time and structure.

There should also be clarity, simplicity, and variety in the retreat schedule as well as activities that match the purpose and goal of the retreat.[175] For example, large group discussions

[175] Garry, "10 Creative Ideas for Nonprofit Staff Retreats" *Joan Garry Consulting: Because Non-Profits are Messy*, https://blog.joangarry.com/creative-staff-retreats/.

need to be balanced with small group reflection times. As already noted, smaller groups give more people opportunities to respond, especially introverts. Times of intense teaching or discussion need to be balanced with time for play and rest. Time for casual and unstructured conversation should be built into the schedule too. Additionally, since learning styles vary widely, retreat leaders would be wise to offer a variety of activities for participants to engage in such as journaling, drawing, and physical exercise.

Importantly, retreat leaders serve a key role and should be carefully chosen. For starters, they need to make the retreat's purpose, goals and expectations clear to participants before they arrive. Once on site, leaders must continue to remind attendees of their overarching goals while connecting the dots from one session to the next, one exercise to the next.[176] Leaders also need to be efficient with the time allotted for each session and able to facilitate as well as synthesize group discussions. Leaders need to be attentive to giving "legs" to the retreat, too, enabling participants to take it home with them in tangible and useful ways.[177] A robust retreat leadership team is also a ready-made coaching team for new mentors once the retreat ends.

Lastly, a strategy for follow-up, training, and recruiting should be created as a part of the overall retreat plan. For starters, leaders should stay in regular communication with attendees to help them connect with mentees or engage in further discernment about whether and when to become a mentor. Regular meetups for accountability should be scheduled for active mentors, too, for they need to be consistently practicing the spiritual disciplines they are encouraging their mentees to adopt. Ongoing training empowers mentors to hone other skills and practices as well. Furthermore, mentors need the support, encouragement, and advice of others engaged in the

[176] Garry, "10 Creative Ideas for Nonprofit Staff Retreats," *Joan Garry Consulting: Because Non-Profits are Messy*, https://blog.joangarry.com/creative-staff-retreats/.
[177] Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 16.

work. Lastly, church leaders must continue to engage in the work of prayer and discernment in order to identify and invite new persons into the work of mentoring on an ongoing basis.

It should be noted here that while the ideal delivery format for this material is a retreat, it easily adapts to a small group study. Group leaders can follow a similar pattern as the retreat, addressing each discipline separately in individual small group sessions over a 5–6-week period. If participants don't have established relationship with each other, a "get to know you" time is recommended prior to the presentation of the five formal sessions (hospitality, testimony, honoring the body, discernment, and examen/closing session). A casual dinner gathering, for example, provides a comfortable setting to introduce attendees to each other and to share their hopes and fears about mentoring.

What Happens After the Retreat?

One retreat experience is inadequate to fully prepare would-be mentors for the work ahead. Nascent mentors need ongoing training and encouragement if they are to succeed and if a mentoring culture is to be sustained in our faith communities. Thankfully, there are many fine resources available to aid those who commit to overseeing a mentoring initiative at a church or on a regional level including Keith Anderson's *Reading Your Life's Story: An Invitation to Spiritual Mentoring* and his collaborative work with Randy D. Reese entitled *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction.* Both are cited in the bibliography below. Anderson and Reese's book offers reflection questions at the end of each chapter which could serve as an initial curriculum for mentoring pairs. Richard Peace's *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story* is a comprehensive exploration of one's spiritual life and enables mentors and mentees to practice the discipline of giving testimony. Each chapter

in Hilary McBride's *The Wisdom of the Body: Finding Healing, Wholeness, and Connection through Embodied Living* provides a set of reflection questions and suggested practices for connecting heart, mind, body, and several of her questions are featured in the journaling exercise that appears in the appendix to Session 3 on honoring the body below. Emily P. Freeman's *The Next Right Thing: Guided Journal* focuses on the disciplines of examen and discernment and is useful for any stage of the mentoring journey. Finally, Adele Alhberg Calhoun's *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* provides a comprehensive catalog of the spiritual disciplines, including reflection questions and specific exercises to practice.

Would-be mentors will understandably have lots of questions coming out of the retreat. Those who leave the experience with a firm calling and interest in mentoring will most likely be primed for action but unsure of first steps. Hopefully some participants will have had a young adult approach them about mentoring prior to the retreat and be ready to start. Others will need more guidance and should be encouraged to pay attention to the young people in their circle of influence (work, church and more) and begin to prayerfully seek guidance about who is a potential fit for mentoring. Pastors, church leaders and other ministry leaders are well-positioned to help identify potential mentoring candidates within a specific congregation and should be consulted. Long distance mentoring relationships should be considered as well. Mentor and mentee could meet on a regular basis virtually and then gather in person less frequently as time and finances allow. Finally, as would-be mentors begin to consider initiating a relationship with a young adult, they need to keep in mind that most of the time it will be the young adult approaching them. Thus, much patience, prayer, and discernment will be needed for those exiting the retreat with a great deal of enthusiasm for mentoring but with no specific mentee match.

While the scope of this artifact doesn't include a comprehensive road map for getting started, a few recommendations are in order. First, mentors need to determine why a young person is seeking mentorship. Is it general support or more specific help they are seeing such as "I need to work on leadership skills"? Secondly, once the mentee's goals are outlined, the mentor and mentee need to make a plan. Some pairs prefer to write out a formal covenant, while others choose a more casual approach. The level of structure in the relationship depends on the mentoring pair, however, one party needs to serve as the initiator of ongoing meetings. Third, mentors need to keep the plan flexible enough to address things as they come up for the mentee, while keeping their overarching goals in mind. Fourth, mentors need to take the time to evaluate the relationship on a regular basis. Regular checkups help determine if more/less structure is needed, how long the mentoring relationship should last, etc. Lastly, consistency with the meeting schedule is key regardless of how often mentor and mentee meet. For example, mentoring relationships that are constrained by an over-busy mentor who regularly cancels meetings are bound to fail. Mentees need to know that their mentor is committed to them and available.

Towards a Vital Expression of the Church and Christian Spirituality

"Instead of people who make the decision for them, young people look for people with whom they can discuss big decisions and feel empowered to make the right one. Instead of solutions, they look for relationships with people who will see them through to the other side of uncertainty, whatever that other side looks like."[178]

The central argument of this work revolves around the conviction that emerging adults need significant relationships with older adults. Young people enter a complex world at the exact time when traditional supports are withdrawn from their lives. Yet they need not go it alone. Emerging adulthood describes a key developmental stage when strategic mentoring relationships can assist young adults in forging their identity, focusing their vocational direction, avoiding potential shipwrecks and pitfalls as well as rooting them more deeply in their faith. Meaningful relationships with seasoned adults can also enable young people to steer clear of deformative practices like sexual hookups, alcoholism, isolation, and self-absorption which do not sustain a life much less one's faith.

However, not any older adult will do. Young adults must be able to trust their mentors with their doubts, questions, and dreams. Emerging adults need hospitable green spaces where they can process their own stories alongside God's story during a very complicated time of life. Thus, fellow pilgrims, Sherpas and wise guides who listen and love well are what emerging adults need, not answer men and women with ready-made, rote responses to the big questions about life and faith.

Traditional mentoring models that rely on cognitive and transactional approaches do not work well with emerging adults either. An organic, fluid, and narrative approach embodies what

[178] Springtide Research Institute, *The State of Religion & Young People 2021: Navigating Uncertainty,* 15.

this generation needs. With this model, mentor and mentee's stories function as the main curriculum for the relationship as these stories are located within the larger story of God and God's purposes for the world. Moreover, mentoring rooted in the time-honored spiritual disciplines, including undervalued practices such as hospitality, testimony, honoring the body, and discernment/examen, has the greatest potential to nurture the character and spiritual formation of emerging adults. In sum, this kind of mentoring is intentional work that is bounded by deep relationship and shaped by spiritual practices rather than by a certain rigid structure.

Yet this kind of mentoring is what most churches lack. An ethos of mentoring must be cultivated in our faith communities at all age levels if the Church hopes to prevent young adults from permanently getting lost in the transition to full adulthood. Churches have a significant role to play in the character and spiritual development of young people, but they must jettison enlisting in and enclave models of ministry and turn instead to *faith* mentoring across the generations and for the long haul.

Furthermore, faith communities need training if they are to move towards effective models of ministry that include mentoring. While concerned adults are alarmed by the current trends of young people leaving their churches, most don't know how to respond. Many also lack the confidence they need to engage in mentoring. These relationships prove especially problematic for older adults who attend churches where intergenerational contact is rare. They simply don't know the young adults in their congregation much less enjoy deep relationships with them. Thus, a retreat that trains would-be mentors is the primary method recommended here for addressing this pressing issue of bringing faith mentors alongside young adults as they embark on the long and winding road to full adulthood. The retreat methodology not only

provides on the job training but roots would-be mentors in the practice of the spiritual disciplines as well as in meaningful and supportive relationships with each other.

But a training retreat for mentors is just one step in a whole constellation of actions that invested faith communities need to consider. First, as noted above, the groundwork must be laid. An ethos of mentoring must permeate a church's ministry posture and programming before a retreat is even considered or scheduled. As mentioned in chapter 4, a good place for churches to start is creating a thoughtful strategy for educating a congregation about the challenges of emerging adulthood and the need for mentors (sermon series, formal and informal teaching, spiritual gifts training, etc.). Times of prayerful examen can also help congregational leaders recognize how their ministry ethos and methodologies hurt or help young adults stay tethered to their communities. A strategy for identifying and recruiting the right people to attend the retreat is also crucial. Listeners and learners who are willing to come alongside emerging adults in a sometimes messy and elongated process are essential, not those with strident perspectives and quick fix mentalities. A specific plan for further training and follow up is critical too once the retreat ends. Relationships of support and encouragement among mentors must be maintained and ongoing training offered so skills are continually honed. Regular training sessions also provide an opportunity for new mentors to encounter additional resources, methodologies, and supervisory accountability with seasoned mentors.

Several worthy topics remain beyond the scope of this dissertation but should be mentioned here. One question the reader may want to explore further is how best to mentor young people in the art of durable relationship building. In an age when most relationships among emerging adults are negotiated through social media, texting and more, mentors need

guidance on how best to shepherd young people toward a level of emotional maturity that enables them to engage in nourishing, in-person relationships including healthy conflict.

Another topic the reader might choose to investigate is whether mentoring is more effective among those with shared vocations. Does the overlap of professions and passions enhance the mentoring relationship? Or would a mentor from another profession give fresh perspective to a mentee on a different vocational path? Is personal compatibility more important in the mentoring relationship than professional compatibility? Pastors with a desire to mentor young clergy, for example, might want to explore these and other related questions such as what are the specific concerns related to mentoring young adults preparing for ministry?

Those who are actively mentoring young adults may also find a broader exploration of the other practices that overlap with mentoring useful. What exactly is spiritual direction, pastoral care, professional counseling, discipling, coaching, and apprenticing? And how do each coincide with or diverge from the most important elements of the mentoring task?

Further, the reader might find a more in-depth study of the role of the Christian practices/spiritual disciplines useful. In her revised version of *Practicing Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People,* editor Dorothy Bass concedes practices must be continually re-evaluated and recalibrated over time depending on the ever-changing circumstances and big historical events of the present moment.[179] Thus readers might want to identify additional (overlooked) spiritual disciplines that need to be included in mentoring relationships in the next decade to come – ones that address climate change and creation care, for example.

Additionally, readers who find the discipline of honoring the body novel might want to do more research in this burgeoning field, asking questions such as how our spiritual formation

[179] Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, xiv.

practices and postures can give more balanced attention to a young person's whole person – mind, body, and soul.[180] And although the concept of a sexual autobiography is discussed in David P. Setran and Chris Kiesling's *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*, this is an area that needs additional study too.[181] In the sexually charged world in which emerging adults find themselves, how might committed mentors more gracefully address and integrate a young person's sexuality and spirituality in life-giving ways?

Ministry leaders and invested lay persons might want to engage in further demographic research as well. Although this dissertation briefly considers the plight of young adults from lower income settings, research regarding the specific impact of mentoring upon those from a wide range of ethnicities, sexual-orientations, and socio-economic circumstances could prove enlightening. Is the mentoring model proposed here a viable template for these communities and constituencies? What needs to be adjusted considering the unique challenges in these contexts?

Lastly, since the one-on-one mentoring relationship has been the primary focus here, some may choose to explore how mentoring happens in a larger community setting such as a local church body or an intentional living community. How does personal, one-on-one mentoring differ from communal mentoring? And how might the practice of personal mentoring contribute to effective mentoring in larger settings like intentional living communities? In turn, how might mentoring that happens on a larger scale inform the one-on-one mentoring process?

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180 The groundbreaking research of Dr. Hilary L. McBride is an invaluable resource on this topic. See her two works cited in the bibliography. See also the works of Lilian Calles Barger, *Eve's Revenge: Women and a Spirituality of the Body*, Tara M. Owen's *Embracing the Body: Finding God in our Flesh and Bone,* and Stephanie Paulsell's *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* cited below.

181 See Setran and Kiesling's chapter 8, *Relationships: Pitfalls and Pathways,* specifically pages 191-192. They offer a nascent sexual autobiography template which poses several insightful questions regarding sexual identity such as "What understanding do you have about your earliest attitudes and memories regarding your sexuality?" and "Which voices shaped your understanding of sexuality in the teenage years?"

Conclusion

The road towards full adulthood is indeed a long and winding one. The world that emerging adults enter is full of significant challenges. The concern that whole generations could get lost in this transition is real. Unfortunately, the Church is often adding to the problem by perpetuating fragile versions of the Gospel like moralistic therapeutic deism. The Church is also guilty of allowing thin cultural narratives (materialism, consumerism, self-absorption, and rugged individualism) to get a foothold with our youth and distance them from a vital expression of the faith. Lastly, the Church has alienated many young adults with its maintenance mentality and combative persona. Emerging generations who have grown up in the Church are indeed caught between the Body of Christ as it is and what they believe it can be, a more conciliatory, inclusive and deeply compassionate expression of their faith and spirituality – indeed of Jesus.

Yet when church communities and committed adults agree to invest in the lives of young adults through mentoring relationships, hope abounds. A mentoring posture towards community life and ministry recognizes that it takes a village to offer the comprehensive, long term support emerging adults need on their path to full maturity. Thus, faith communities that are intentional about noticing the children and youth in their congregation, naming (and employing) their gifts and graces, and nurturing their hopes for the future *through mentoring* are proving successful in keeping emerging adults tethered to the Church and the Christian faith for the long haul. These faith communities are serving as fellow pilgrims, Sherpas, and guides, providing the hospitable green spaces their emerging adults need for honest conversations and authentic relationships, and ultimately equipping them with the tools, indeed the courage, they need for the long journey ahead.

Retreat Leader's Guide

Sample Schedule

Friday
6 pm **Opening Session: Gathering Meal** with Conversation Starters:

Have ice breaker questions printed on 3x5 cards and scattered across tables.
Include light, fun questions as well as those that will evoke deeper conversation.
Invite participants to answer one or more questions as they enjoy their meal.
**Resources: https://www.gifts.com/blog/conversation-starters
https://conversationstartersworld.com/250-conversation-starters/
https://www.scienceofpeople.com/conversation-starters-topics/
https://www.quizbreaker.com/ice-breaker-questions
https://museumhack.com/list-icebreakers-questions/
https://toggl.com/blog/icebreaker-questions

7-8:30 pm **First Session: Hospitality**

Saturday
9-10:30 am **Second Session: Testimony**

10:30-12 noon Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

12-1pm Lunch

1-2:30 pm **Third Session: Honoring the Body**

2:30- 4 pm Time for Reflection, Rest, or Recreation

4-5:30 pm **Fourth Session: Discernment**

5:30 pm Dinner and Free Time

Sunday
9-11:00 am **Final Session: Examen** including a time of Worship and Communion

Opening Session: Hospitality

The goal of this session is to begin conversations that draw people into closer relationship with each other, create space for them to share their fears about mentoring, and to open themselves up to deep growth and transformation with God and others through the practice of hospitality.

Leader's Notes
Encourage participants to bring a journal and a pen to each session (or make these available) for taking notes and for guided reflection times that happen throughout the retreat. Have some or all of the following materials available in adequate quantities: journals (if needed), pens, Post It Portable Easel Pads, Post It Construction Paper/or heavy-duty tape, sharpies, markers, crayons and the like. Regarding space, begin with comfortable chairs in a large circle for the whole group to be visible to each other. Make sure lighting is adequate.

Gathering (5 minutes)
Just Breathe
Retreat leader invites participants into a time of silence and deep breathing in order to root themselves in their body and the present moment, concluding with a welcome prayer (adapted):
Welcome, welcome, welcome. Lord.
We welcome everything that comes to us this weekend because we know it's for our healing.
We welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions.
We let go of our desire for power and control.
We let go of our desire for affection, esteem, approval and pleasure.
We let go of our desire for survival and security.
We let go of our desire to change any situation, condition, person or ourselves.
We open ourselves to the love and presence of God and God's action within us. Amen[182]

Getting to Know You: Making a Name Puzzle (15 minutes)
The retreat leader gives each person a piece of construction or plain paper and provides a variety of markers. Each person is invited to write his or her first name down the left-hand side of the paper, lining up the letters one on top of the other. Next to each letter, everyone is directed to write a word or phrase that describes something about themselves, beginning with the same letter. When everyone has completed their name puzzle, they are invited to share what they have written. The name puzzles are then 'quilted' (attached) together to represent the whole retreat community and hung on a wall in the meeting space.[183]

Sharing our Stories (30-40 minutes)
Allow participants to journal their responses to the questions below. The retreat leader should have them written on a white board or Post It Portable Easel Pad, etc.

- *How would you describe mentoring?*
- *What is the greatest fear you have about becoming a mentor?*

[182] "The Welcoming Prayer," My Shepherd King: Following in the Steps of my Savior, January 13, 2018, https://www.myshepherdking.com/the-welcoming-prayer-by-father-thomas-keating/.
[183] Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 65.

- *Who has been a mentor to you and how would you describe their investment in you?*

The retreat leader then divides the large group up and invites smaller groups to share their answers to the questions above.
Small group 'scribes' collate responses on Post It Portable Easel Pads or similar.
Once the retreat leader discerns small groups are finished, he/she invites scribes to report out their group's summary responses to the larger group, posting those on a prominent wall while noting similarities and differences in the responses.

Study (10-15 minutes)
The retreat leader now shifts focus to briefly introduce the discipline of hospitality highlighting key themes from the primer. The leader then assigns each small group one of the Luke passages below, noting that this is a gospel focused on table fellowship and hospitality. Each group reads their passage and answers the question: *What does this text tell us about God's hospitality?*

Luke 5:27-32 (Jesus a guest of the tax collector Levi/Matthew)
Luke 7:36-48 (Jesus anointed by a sinful woman)
Luke 9:10-17 (Jesus feeds the 5,000)
Luke 10:38-42 (Martha and Mary)
Luke 14:1, 7-14 (Jesus on table manners)
Luke 14:15-24 (Jesus and the story of the Great Feast)
Luke 15:11-24 (The Prodigal Son)
Luke 19:1-10 (Jesus and Zacchaeus)
Luke 22:14-20 (The Last Supper)
Luke 24: 28-34 (The Emmaus Road)

Once the retreat leader discerns small groups are finished, he/she invites the large group to re-gather and discuss responses. At this time, attendees should be encouraged to share insights about God's hospitality from other portions of Scripture as well.

The retreat leader then invites all to reflect further on the question by participating in the practice of Lectio Divina, choosing one of the passages above for the whole group to focus on.

Practice (15- 20 minutes)
The retreat leader should take time to briefly explain what the practice of Lectio Divina is (an ancient practice that moves believers beyond an informational reading of Scripture to a formational reading of the text) and how it works, reviewing each step below before beginning and assigning a reader or readers.

Step 1: The biblical passage is read aloud.
Step 2: Each person is invited to share the word or phrase that caught their attention, without comment.
Step 3: The same passage is read a second time.
Step 4: Each person is invited to repeat the word or phrase that caught their attention and to share any connections they are noticing between the word/phrase and their current life, ministry, etc.

Step 5: The same passage is read a third time.
Step 6: Following this reading, participants are encouraged to sit comfortably in a time of silence with their palms up in a receptive posture, inviting God to speak.
Step 7: The same passage is read a final time.
Step 8: Lastly, participants are invited to share with each other what they heard from God in Scripture and/or how they are being invited to respond.

The retreat leader should conclude the Lectio Divina practice by noting it can easily be adapted to the mentoring context. It is one way that both mentor and mentee can better attune their ears to the voice of God, something that will be discussed more at length in the Fourth Session of the retreat which focuses on the spiritual discipline of discernment.

Reflect
The leader brings the evening to a close and gives the following assignment: Before the Second Session tomorrow, pray about how you can concretely extend hospitality to the young people currently in your/your church's care or those you hope to influence once you leave this retreat. Be prepared to share one idea.

Second Session: Testimony

The goal of this session is to enable participants to speak about their own spiritual journeys in meaningful ways so that they can, in turn, share their testimony with others.

Leader's Notes
For the Spiritual Life Graph exercise below, leaders will want to have Post It Portable Easel Pads, Post It Construction Paper and heavy-duty tape, sharpies, markers, crayons, etc., available on tables for participants to do their work. To prepare, leaders should familiarize themselves with the concept of a Spiritual Life Graph and the variety of samples that are pictured on the Soul Shepherding website: (https://www.soulshepherding.org/mapping-your-spiritual-journey/).[184] Leaders will also want to construct their own personal graphs ahead of time and share them with the group at the appropriate time. Regarding space, begin again with comfortable chairs in a large circle for the whole group to be visible to each other, making sure lighting is adequate.

Gathering (5-10 minutes)
Palms Down, Palms up
The retreat leader instructs participants to sit comfortably in their chairs with eyes closed and feet flat on the floor with fisted hands resting on their legs. Participants are invited to take several deep breaths, rooting themselves in the space and in their bodies.

The retreat leader then begins a time of directed prayer asking *What do you need to release as you enter this day and this space?*
At this time the leader can give specific examples like: *Lord, I have concerns about an upcoming doctor's appointment. Father, I have that work project that is looming. Lord, a family member is in distress. God, I fear I don't have what it takes to be a good mentor.*
The leader then continues: *Whatever your concerns are, share them with God right now and as you do, relax your palms, and rest them on your legs as a physical representation of your desire to release these concerns.*

After a time of silence, the leader instructs participants to turn their palms up in a receptive posture saying: *Pray now for what you need.*
Once again, the leader can give specific examples like: *Lord, I need peace about my doctor's appointment. Father, I need clarity about how to begin that work project. Lord, give me wisdom to know how to help my family member. God, give me courage as I embark on this new adventure of mentoring.*

After one last time of silence, the leader ends with a concluding prayer (spontaneous or written).

Debrief the Previous Session/Hospitality (10-15 minutes)
The retreat leader refers to the previous night's assignment and asks participants to respond to the following questions:

[184] Bill Gaultiere, "Mapping Your Spiritual Journey," Soul Shepherding, https://www.soulshepherding.org/mapping-your-spiritual-journey/.

- *How can each of us extend hospitality to the young people currently in our care or those we hope to influence once we leave this retreat?*
- *What might it look like for each of us to journey alongside a young adult as they try to find their footing in life and faith?*

Study (15-20 minutes)
The retreat leader now shifts focus to briefly introduce the discipline of giving testimony highlighting key themes from the primer. The leader then assigns persons to lead a "Readers Theater" version of Hebrews 11 with discussion to follow. (See Appendix 1, *Faith in What We Don't See*)

After hearing this reading, the leader invites the large group to respond to these questions:
- *How is your own faith strengthened by remembering and rehearsing the stories of our faith ancestors?*
- *Who is your faith hero in Scripture and why?*

Practice (20-30 minutes)
The retreat leader now explains the concept of a Spiritual Life Graph (a concrete way to help us verbalize our faith stories) and shares his/her own graph. The retreat leader then invites participants to construct their own referring to the introductory comments and varieties of graphs detailed on the Soul Shepherding website: https://www.soulshepherding.org/mapping-your-spiritual-journey/. (For simplicity's sake, the retreat leader may want to choose one method to construct his/her spiritual life graph and invite participants to use that method too.)

Sharing our Stories (20-30 minutes)
After giving ample time for each participant to complete their Spiritual Life Graph, the retreat leader divides the larger group, allowing each member to explain their graph in a smaller group setting.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their graphs, the retreat leader re-gathers the larger group in a circle and asks:
- *What was it like sharing your spiritual story/testimony with others?*
- *How might knowing your own story enable you to better hear and hold with grace the stories of others?*

Reflect
The retreat leader brings the session to a close, giving the following assignment: During the next hour or so, read the testimony of the apostle Paul in Acts 26 and note the important movements in his spiritual story. Then follow the guidelines in your handout for writing your own autobiography (See Appendix 2, *A Guide to Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography.* This should be printed out and distributed to participants at this time). Finally, try to identify one specific young person in your relationship network who might benefit from hearing your testimony.

Third Session: Honoring the Body

The goal of this session is to help participants love and honor their bodies and recognize the critical role the body plays in spiritual formation and growth.

Leader's Notes
At the end of this session, the leader should be prepared to provide additional time for those who would like to stay and talk about how their body image has impacted their spirituality in healthy or unhealthy ways. Others will be dismissed to consider the questions in the *Reflect* section.

Gathering (5 minutes)
The retreat leader briefly explains and then leads participants in a body prayer using the four movements (await, allow, accept, attend) and associated body postures outlined in Appendix 3, *Body Practices*. A visual guide/presentation of the prayer can be used as well: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lKdXykzTXk&feature=youtu.be.[185]

Debrief the Previous Session/Testimony (10 minutes)
Participants are now invited to sit with one other person and swap faith testimonies using insights gained from their Spiritual Life Graph and Spiritual Autobiography exercises.

Study (25-30 minutes)
The retreat leader now shifts focus to briefly introduce the discipline of honoring the body, highlighting key themes from the primer. The leader then divides the larger group into groups of 3-4 and gives each one a biblical character to read about, discuss, and whose story they need to be prepared to act out.

- Hagar (Genesis 16)
- Mary the mother of Jesus/Mary and Elizabeth (Luke 1:26-45)
- The sinful woman who anoints Jesus (Luke 7:36-50)

The leader has these questions posted in a prominent place for the small groups to consider:

- *How does God care for the body and person of this biblical character?*
- *How is this person's body intimately connected to her spirituality?*
- *How can this passage be acted out/embodied?*

Once the large group regathers, each small group is instructed to act out their passage. Following each presentation, the leader gives the whole group an opportunity to respond to the embodied presentations and debrief main insights gained.

Sharing our Stories (10-15 minutes)
The leader now guides participants through a series of statements and questions, leaving time for reflective silence throughout the exercise. Participants are invited to get comfortable in whatever

[185] "An Advent 'Body' Prayer inspired by Julian of Norwich," The Episcopal Diocese of Newark, November 30, 2020, https://dioceseofnewark.org/content/await-allow-accept-attend-advent-body-prayer.

position they choose to take – sitting in a chair, on the floor, etc. Participants are also encouraged to journal their answers to each question if helpful. The leader begins the exercise with a time of deep breathing and silence.

- *Give thanks for your body and the parts you especially like.*
- *Name the positive and negative messages you have received about your body from family or others.*
- *Where has God been as you received these messages?*
- *What messages about your body is God encouraging you to release?*
- *What messages about your body is God encouraging you to embrace?*[186]

Practice (30-40 minutes)
Allow participants to choose a body practice to engage in on their own (see Appendix 3).

- *Praying the Body Prayer again*
- *Praying the Welcoming Prayer*
- *Taking a Nature Walk*
- *Journaling or other practice*

Leader reconvenes the larger group at a specified time and invites participants to share what they experienced or heard from God during their body practice and then ends with prayer:
Abba, my body is yours, redeemed and more beautiful than I have yet been able to own. Help me to encounter you in the story of my body. Protect me from shame or hiding and allow me to see and bless my desires. Show me where I need to grieve or feel anger and let me name truly and accurately all that has happened to me and through me. Lead me into redemption that I may know your glory.[187]

Reflect
The leader concludes this session by giving instructions for participants to further reflect on the spiritual discipline of honoring the body by considering the questions posed in the journaling exercise in Appendix 3 (if they have not already done so) or by responding to some additional questions which can be presented to them in a handout or posted in a prominent place:
Can you point to a time when your body was trying to tell you something? How did you respond?
Have there been times when your body has been mistreated by you or by others? How did you process this abuse?
What, if anything, has alienated you from your body and from God?
What confessions, prayers of anger, prayers for healing or prayers of gratitude do you want to express to God related to your body and body image?
(Participants should also be encouraged to rest or exercise their bodies as needed during this time.)

[186] Owens, *Embracing the Body*, 47-48.
[187] Owens, 222.

Fourth Session: Discernment

The goal of this session is to help participants understand that God longs to speak to them and does speak to them but that hearing from God requires training and practice.

Leader's Notes
Begin this session in a larger group circle. For the Visio Divina practice below leaders should have an image printed or invite participants to pull up that image on their cell phones. Resource links for the practice as well as gallery pictures to choose from can be found here:
https://www.wvumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/AC_PrayerPractices.pdf
https://www.lindsayboyer.com/visio-divina
https://www.pbrenewalcenter.org/blog/contemplative-prayer-the-five-steps-of-visio-divina/
https://www.upperroom.org/sight_psalms
http://ckpc.org/visio-divina-gallery/

Gathering (5 minutes)
Retreat leader invites participants into another time of silence and deep breathing in order to root themselves in their body and the present moment concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

Debrief the Previous Session/Honoring the Body (10-15 minutes)
Leader invites the large group to reflect: *How might knowing the story of our own bodies better equip us to mentor others in more holistic ways?*

Sharing our Stories (10-15 minutes)
The retreat leader now shifts focus to briefly introduce the discipline of discernment highlighting key themes from the primer and then asks participants to respond to the question: *When and how have you heard from God in the past?* Allow participants to respond to the list below or recount other moments not on the list:

- A mystical experience
- A conversion experience
- A dream with deep meaning
- Reading a Bible passage
- An unusual worship experience
- In nature
- In a time of prayer
- In music or art
- The still, small inner 'voice'
- Through an event
- In a relationship
- During childbirth
- In an encounter with a child or a wise person[188]

[188] Richard Peace, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story (*Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 26.

Study (20-30 minutes)
Leader now divides the group into small groups of 3-4 persons. Each group is given one biblical character to read about and discuss.

- Abraham (Genesis 12:1-9)
- Samuel (1 Samuel 3)
- Elijah (1Kings 19:1-15)
- Paul (Acts 9: 1-5 and 16:6-9)

Small groups are also given these questions to consider after reading about their assigned character above:

- *What events in your life could have been God speaking to you?*
- *When has God spoken to you directly or through another person?*
- *What are some practical tips you would give to others in how to listen for God's voice?*
- *What are some big decisions you are currently facing? And what, if anything, have your heard from God about how you should respond?*

Leader re-gathers the large group to debrief and identify overarching patterns/themes in responses to the biblical texts and small group discussion questions above.

Practice (20-30 minutes)
Participants are now invited to journal through a Visio Divina Exercise.
Leader explains that Visio Divina (Latin for *divine seeing*) is a prayer practice that creates space to listen and pay attention to the Holy in our lives. Based on the 6th century monastic practice of Lectio Divina where the object of prayer is a passage of scripture, Visio Divina allows the Spirit to speak through *images*.

Leader shares a focal image so it is visible for all to see (or accessible by cell phone) and guides participants through the practice below.

Prepare
Find a comfortable position where you can gaze at the image.
Settle into God's presence by connecting with your breath.
Move your awareness from your head into your heart.
Know that God can be known through many different forms and images.

Be present
Allow your eyes to gaze gently on your image.
Notice the shapes and the colors.
Notice the lines and the details.
Look for symbols.
Notice if there is a place on the image where your eye is invited to linger.
Are you attracted to a certain detail or color?
Notice where your energy is drawn.

Notice what your eye is avoiding or passing over.
What part inspires you?
Where do you experience resistance?
Slowly become aware of the place on the image that is just for you today. Linger there. Be open and present to it.

Open your imagination
As you reflect on your image, what feelings or longings are evoked?
What memories or hopes are stirred?
Make room within your heart for whatever wants to emerge.
Let go of judging or critiquing.

Respond
Slowly begin to notice what is being revealed in your seeing and through what you are feeling.

Rest
What insights have you gained?
What invitation is growing in you?
What is God calling you to do or be?

Reflect
Participants are encouraged to share their insights from the Visio Divina exercise with each other over the dinner hour that follows. And as participants return to their rooms for the evening, they are invited to review and/or respond to the additional discernment questions below which can be presented to them in a handout or posted in a prominent place:
When have you felt the most alive or awake?
When do you feel the most like yourself?
What do you love to do?
What do you hate or struggle to do?
What needs in your church and community weigh most on your heart?
In what ways have people typically felt blessed by you?
Which of your gifts/skills have helped others the most?[189]

[189] Material provided via email from Kate Bowler, "Vocation/Calling Journal Exercise," August 4, 2021.

Final Session: Examen

The goal of this session is for participants to learn how to reflect on their own lives practically and prayerfully with the intention of recognizing God's presence and discerning God's will.

Leader's Notes
Resources for this session include:
https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/
https://pray-as-you-go.org/article/examen-prayer
http://docsdining.blogspot.com/2016/06/ortberg-on-reviewing-day-with-god.html
https://www.beingdisciples.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Prayer-of-the-Examen-Guide.pdf

Gathering (10 minutes)
Leader welcomes participants into the space with a reading from Psalm 95:1-7.
Come, let us sing to the Lord!
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come to him with thanksgiving.
Let us sing psalms of praise to him.
For the Lord is a great God,
a great King above all gods.
He holds in his hands the depths of the earth
and the mightiest mountains.
The sea belongs to him, for he made it.
His hands formed the dry land, too.
Come, let us worship and bow down.
Let us kneel before the Lord our maker,
for he is our God.
We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care.

Participants are invited to sing or read together the lyrics to *Be Thou My Vision*
Be Thou my vision O Lord of my heart.
Not be all else to me save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought by day or by night
Waking or sleeping my treasure Thou art.

Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me Lord
Thou my redeemer, my love Thou hast won
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not nor vain empty praise
Thou mine inheritance now and always
Thou and Thou only first in my heart

Great God of heaven my treasure Thou art

Great God of heaven my victory won
Now I reach heaven's joys O bright heaven's sun
Heart of my own heart whatever be fall
Still be my vision O ruler of all.

Leader ends with a Prayer for Guidance:
O Lord God, help us to trust you with all our decisions and our futures. Let us lean on you with all our heart instead of relying on our own imperfect understanding. Give us clear guidance in our lives, Lord. As we submit ourselves to you, we know that you will direct our paths and we can have confidence that your direction is always the best way. Hear our prayer, Father. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Debrief the Previous Session/Discernment (10 minutes)
Participants are invited to share any insights gleaned from their conversations or journaling time the previous evening.

Study (15-20 minutes)
The retreat leader now shifts focus to briefly introduce the examen highlighting key themes from the primer. The leader then reviews the story of Joseph up to Genesis 45 and reads (or asks someone to read) Genesis 45:1-15.
The leader then asks the group to briefly journal about the following questions:

- *How does Joseph interpret the struggles he has endured?*
- *Would you have come to the same conclusion?*
- *What practices do you currently engage in that regularly remind you of God's presence, action, and direction in your life? If any?*

Leader solicits responses to each question and invites participants to consider the prayer of examen as a critical tool for achieving deeper intimacy with God and direction for the future.

Practice (20-30 minutes)
Leader again reviews the purpose and practice of the Prayer of Examen.
"The prayer of the examen, or examination of consciousness, is a practice intended to bring us into a deeper awareness of God's presence and leading in our everyday. It highlights God's concern with the minutia of our lives: the big events and small, our thoughts and activities, what we do to others and what is done to us, and even our emotions. The examen acknowledges God's willingness to use all of these to lead us into deeper relationship with him and greater partnership in his kingdom ... The prayer of the examen not only helps us identify God's presence in our lives but also helps discern his leading."[190]

[190] J. William Feffer,"Prayer of the Examen,"Being Disciples, 2015, https://www.beingdisciples.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Prayer-of-the-Examen-Guide.pdf.

The leader then invites participants to engage in the prayer, using their journals to record their impressions and thoughts. (Prayer adapted from J. William Feffer, *Prayer of the Examen:* https://www.beingdisciples.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Prayer-of-the-Examen-Guide.pdf)

Become aware of and rest in the presence of God
Take a breath. Remember God is always present. God is in and around us. God is in the air we breathe. Take another breath. Breathe in the presence of God. Pay attention to your breath if it helps. Trust in the presence of God. Rest in it. God is with you. God is in you. God loves you right where you are. Take another breath and just be.

Review the retreat with gratitude
What are you thankful for over these past two days? What gifts has God given you? Think through Friday night and Saturday and pause to give thanks to God for each gift received.

Review the retreat in God's presence
Reflect on the specific events of the weekend, recalling each session: *Hospitality, Giving Testimony, Honoring the Body, Discernment.* When did you feel a strong sense of love? Did anything make you angry? When did you experience joy? What about excitement? Did anything scare you? Did you ever feel sad? Engage your emotions. Where is God in the emotion?

Respond
Choose the emotion, moment, or experience during the retreat that stands out. How is God inviting you to explore that more intentionally? What is shouting for your attention? Is there something you are particularly anxious to engage? Is there something you need to do or stop doing? Enter a conversation with God. Speak and listen. Ask God for direction. When you leave the examen, what action will you take because of your conversation with God today?

Sharing our Stories (30-40 minutes)
Leader invites group members to share their experience with the examen with one other person (perhaps neighbor sitting next to them).

Leader then invites the group into a time of final evaluation.

- *What are your main spiritual discoveries from the weekend's activities?*
- *What spiritual discipline/s made the biggest impression and impact?*
- *What has been your biggest epiphany about mentoring? Are you sensing a definitive call to engage in the work going forward?*
- *How has the retreat equipped you to be a mentor (or a better mentor)?*
- *What additional training and encouragement do you feel you need?*
- *Has God impressed upon you a specific person or persons to approach about mentoring?*

Reflect (15-20 minutes)
Leaders conclude the retreat with communion, beginning with a reading from 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 before serving the elements: *On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took*

bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.

Prayer of St. Francis: (Pray together audibly as a group, sing, or listen as the prayer is sung: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agPnMxp5Occ)
Lord make Me an instrument of Your peace
Where there is hatred let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness joy.
O Divine master grant that I may
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand.
To be loved. as to love
For it's in giving that we receive
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are born
To eternal life.
Amen.

Leader/s offer a final commission and benediction to participants:
God calls us to step out in faith, to follow where God leads even if what our Lord calls us to do seems impossible. So, let's go from here with courage, trusting in God's presence and power, and eager to do God's will. And may the blessing of our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, be among you and within you wherever you go. Amen. [191]

[191] Re:Worship, "Commission and Benediction," July 31, 2011 (Adapted), https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/07/commission-benediction-matthew-1422-33.html.

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Appendix 1: Faith in What We Don't See (Adapted from *The Message*)

Reader 1: The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd. By faith, we see the world called into existence by God's word, what we see created by what we don't see.

Reader 2: By an act of faith, Abel brought a better sacrifice to God than Cain.

Reader 1: It was what he believed, not what he brought, that made the difference. That's what God noticed and approved as righteous.

Reader 2: By faith, Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land.

Reader 3: He was warned about something he couldn't see, acted on what he was told, and his family was saved. His act of faith drew a sharp line between the evil of the unbelieving world and the rightness of the believing world. As a result, Noah became intimate with God.

Reader 2: By an act of faith, Abraham said yes to God's call to travel to an unknown place that would become his home.

Reader 3: When he left, Abraham had no idea where he was going. But by an act of faith, he lived in the country promised him, as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise. Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen city with real, eternal foundations—the City designed and built by God.

Reader 4: By faith, barren Sarah was able to become pregnant, old woman as she was at the time.

Reader 5: Because she believed the One who had made the promise. That's how it happened that from one man's dead and shriveled loins there are now people numbering into the millions.

Reader 4: Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing.

Reader 3: How did they do it? They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them and has a City waiting for them.

Reader 4: By faith, Abraham, at the time of testing, offered Isaac back to God.

Reader 5: Acting in faith, Abraham was as ready to return the promised son, his only son, as he had been to receive him—and this after he had already been told, "Your descendants shall come from Isaac." Abraham figured that if God wanted to, he could raise the dead.

Reader 4: By an act of faith, Isaac reached into the future as he blessed Jacob and Esau.

Reader 5: By an act of faith, Jacob on his deathbed blessed each of Joseph's sons in turn, blessing them with God's blessing, not his own.

Reader 4: By an act of faith, Joseph, while dying, prophesied the exodus of Israel, and made arrangements for his own burial.

Reader 5: By an act of faith, Moses' parents hid him away for three months after his birth.

Reader 2: By faith, Moses, when grown, refused the privileges of the Egyptian royal house. He chose a hard life with God's people. He valued suffering in the Messiah's camp far greater than Egyptian wealth because he was looking ahead, anticipating the payoff. By an act of faith, Moses turned his heel on Egypt, indifferent to the king's blind rage. He had his eye on the One no eye can see and kept right on going. By an act of faith, he kept the Passover Feast and sprinkled Passover blood on each house so that the destroyer of the firstborn wouldn't touch them.

Reader 4: By an act of faith, Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. The Egyptians tried it and drowned.

Reader 5: By faith, the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days, and the walls fell flat.

Reader 4: By an act of faith, Rahab, the Jericho harlot, welcomed the spies and escaped the destruction that came on those who refused to trust God.

Reader 1: I could go on and on, but I've run out of time. There are so many more—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets. Through acts of faith, they toppled kingdoms, made justice work, took the promises for themselves. Even though their lives of faith were exemplary, not one of these people got their hands on what was promised. But God had a better plan: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith incomplete apart from ours.

All: The Word of the Lord!

Appendix 2: A Guide to Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

"*God has crafted our character and given us a role that will reveal something about him that no one else's story can reveal in quite the same way."*[192]

Reflect on your story plot line

- *When did God enter your story? Your family history?*
- *Who are the important characters in your story?*
- *What is your relationship history with each of these main characters?*
- *When has tragedy struck?*
- *What wounds have you sustained?*
- *When have you experienced joy and fulfillment?*
- *At what times were you most alive spiritually?*
- *At what times did you feel most distant from God?*
- *Can you identify the major themes in your story?*
- *What do these themes reveal about your life with God?*
- *When have you had a spiritual friend or mentor?*

Consider your wounds

- *How have your wounds shaped and transformed your identity and character?*
- *What have you learned about yourself and about God through suffering?*
- *How has God provided for you during your struggles?*

Write the next chapter

- *What is God calling you to do now?*
- *Who am I to serve?*
- *Where am I to be?*
- *What burden am I to bear?*
- *What wrongs am I to right?*
- *What dreams do I need to fulfill?*
- *What new patterns of thinking and being in the world do I need to adopt?*
- *Where do I find the greatest pleasure and joy?*
- *What do I need to do now to live without regrets?*[193]

[192] Allender, *To Be Told*, 69.

[193] Allender, 105-116.

Appendix 3: Body Practices

Praying the Body Prayer
"A form of body prayer has become popular that is known as the Prayer of Julian of Norwich (a 14th century mystic). *Some sources claim that Julian originated the prayer, but most say it is a contemporary body prayer that uses four key words from the Order of Julian of Norwich, which in turn come from Julian's writings. The words are Await; Allow; Accept; and Attend. Each word has an associated body movement with it, which you may do either standing or sitting. However, you may also use those words – without the body movements – to pause and pray in a moment of anxiety or stress, in order to help you reconnect with God."*[194]

AWAIT (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God's presence, not as you expect, hope, or imagine, but just as it is in this moment.
ALLOW (reach up, hands open, above shoulders if you can): Allow a sense of God's presence (or not) to come and be what it is, without meeting your expectations.
ACCEPT (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come. Accept that you are not in charge. Accept the infinity of God's presence, present whether or not you are aware.
ATTEND (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, actions that God invites you to from this stance of openness.

You may repeat the prayer several times. A visual presentation of the prayer may be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lKdXykzTXk&feature=youtu.be.

Praying the Welcoming Prayer
"The Welcoming Prayer helps to dismantle acquired emotional programs and to heal the wounds of a lifetime by addressing them where they are stored — in the body."[195]

First movement – Feel and sink into what you are experiencing this moment in your body.
Second movement – Welcome what you are experiencing in your body as an opportunity to consent to the Divine Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
Third movement – Let go by saying "I let go of my desire for security, affection, control and embrace this moment as it is."[196]

***A Visual presentation of the Welcoming Prayer:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_vW4-3xmak.

[194] "An Advent 'Body' Prayer inspired by Julian of Norwich," The Episcopal Diocese of Newark, November 30, 2020, https://dioceseofnewark.org/content/await-allow-accept-attend-advent-body-prayer.
[195] "Welcoming Prayer," Contemplative Outreach, https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/welcoming-prayer-method/.
[196] "Welcoming Prayer," Contemplative Outreach, https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/welcoming-prayer-method/.

Nature Walk
Get outside and move!
Pay attention to your body as you walk.
What feels good?
What is causing pain?
Where is your stress located?
Can you release it as you walk?
What is God communicating to you about your body and body image as you move?

Journaling Exercise
Reflect on one or more of the questions below:
(From Hilary L. McBride's *The Wisdom of Your Body: Finding Healing, Wholeness, and Connection through Embodied Living*.)[197]

What early messages did you receive about your body?

What social or cultural messages shaped how you experience your bodily self?

If you could go back and tell your younger self something loving about your body, what age would you go back to? What would you say?

How do you think about your body? What is the quality of your relationship with your body?

Reflect on the media you consume. How does that impact how you feel about yourself and how you think about your body?

If your body did not change, but you could wake up one morning and feel differently about your body, what would you want to be different? How would you live, and what would that be like?

Growing up, what bodies did you learn were "other"? Have you had one of the bodies that you learned was other? How do those ideas express themselves in your life?

If you have experienced identity-based oppression and marginalization, in which spaces have you found yourself more at ease?

How did what you learned about sex and sexuality growing up shape how you think about sex and how you interact with others in relationship now (romantically or otherwise)?

What do you wish you could go back and tell your younger self about sexuality?

What would you like to believe about your body? What are some steps you could take to get there?

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[197] McBride, *The Wisdom of Your Body,* 49, 105, 181, 207.