





# Mentoring Leaders Within the Circle of Grace

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The importance of informal mentoring in the life and ministry of pastoral leaders is greater than ever. The Formal and Non-formal Education for **leadership development** of pastoral leaders are expanding and doing great. What is lagging is **leader development** of pastoral leaders which informal mentoring seeks to address.



FE increases knowledge in biblical and theological content and NFE trains for practical ministry skills to improve competency.

However, many pastoral leaders are being shaped by the perspectives and practices of the surrounding culture of greatness that is too individualistic and autocratic.



All over the world we see pastoral leaders who act like a tribal chief, strong man dictator, a religious guru, corporate CEO, and abusive father. This is not surprising. Even the disciples aspired to **become great leaders** like those who lord it over from the top. Jesus considered worldly style of great leaders as **false leaders** not fit as kingdom leaders.



Many pastoral leaders are **becoming great but lacking growth** in Christlikeness. Consequently we see alarming trends among pastoral leaders.

- ▶ **Low-level of respectability** – downfall of celebrity pastoral leaders and toxic leadership.
- ▶ **Low-level of reliability** – pastors' ministry are regarded as irrelevant in today's complex issues.
- ▶ **Low-level of resiliency** – busyness leading to burnout; stressful ministry tempts many pastoral leaders to quit.

Jesus Christ calls for a different way to lead by developing a **culture grace**; not by moving up to greatness but radical emptying to move down below by grace to serve in humility and holiness, suffering and sacrifice. Leaders are all sinners slowly becoming saints by mutual accountability in community.

Mentoring offers a **circle of grace** to pastoral leaders to claim the truth of who they are as God's beloved to become like Christ. **Peer mentoring strengthens leaders' spiritual formation as the source of leadership.**



# 1. A Safe Place to Trust



False leaders “take pride for what is seen rather than to what is in the heart” (2Cor 5:12) by trying “to impress people” by “looking good before others” (Gal 6:12). Jesus condemned false leaders who show off their status, success, and spirituality (Matt 23; see [www.mentorlink.org](http://www.mentorlink.org) false leaders)

In a success-driven ministry pastors are pressured to show they are **good but not godly, although impressive they are lacking integrity**. If we strive for success, it is difficult to find a space of grace to claim the truth of who we are to freely express our problem and pain without feeling judged.





# Feedback for Growth

Leaders have **blind spots**. Their imperfections are so glaring yet they demand perfection to perform. Pastors are ready to explain their misconduct with Bible verses.


Peer mentoring provides honest feedback to one another **not in a guilt-tripping condemnation but in a gentle compassion of grace**. In a mentoring relationship we submit to accountability by giving permission to have accessibility into our private space to know where we badly need to change.



## Freedom to Grow

Many are held captive by the dark sides of a damaged person due to unhealed wounds. They may need counselling and therapy. But in most case what is needed is listening ears to express life's trauma before it becomes toxic emotion.

If we can share the truth reality of what we are going through and be listened with understanding we can be set free to grow.




Mentoring in the circle grace offers a safe place to **trust**, to be **transparent**, and **transform** to be like Jesus Christ.

Growth happens by claiming the truth of human reality in humility and honesty to start the process of change. If we are in a safe place, we can let mentors **confront us in love to repent and renew in the image of Christ** (Eph 4:15).



## 2. A Shaping Place to Train





We should not underestimate the power of culture, equipped with technology, to shape the way we live and lead (cf. Rom 12:2).

If we are to remain faithful as followers of Jesus, we must have a counter-cultural friends, no matter how small, to support and share the life-leadership of Jesus amidst the pressure to conform. We need spiritual conversation with fellow pastors who come alongside and committed to live and lead like Jesus to help us stay in the course of obedience.

# Mentors Model Christlikeness

Leaders of influence are those who imitate the way of Jesus (1Cor 11:1; Heb 13:7; 1Tim 4:12). Mentors train by modelling Christlike life-leadership.

**Albert Bandura** - learning can occur by observing examples of others who live and lead like Jesus Christ.

**Michael Polanyi** – tacit knowledge gained through experience and wisdom are revealed unknowingly by exposure to godly leaders in mentoring relationship.



## Motivation for Christlikeness

In order to remain faithful to finish well, we need “cloud of witness”, dead and living, to cheer us when we are about to say it’s enough.

Mentors motivate us not by their success stories which can make us look like a failure but by stories of their struggle and suffering where they experience God’s grace to find strength in weakness and weariness. **Mentors inspires us to be resilient by the stories they share in humility.**



Informal mentoring is a **life-on-life encounter in a circle of grace where life shapes life to train in Christlike maturity**. Peer mentors modeling and motivating one another transform by being a community of Christ.

We can't serve in isolation. We need informal interaction and inspiration of fellow pastors to keep going and growing to be like Christ.





### 3. A Sacred Place to Transform

We believe that the real mentor is the Holy Spirit. Spiritual mentoring happens in the presence of the Triune God (see [www.mentorlink.org](http://www.mentorlink.org) mentoring process).

Mentors only **facilitate spiritual openness** to the presence of the Holy Spirit. They are co-discerners **to look** at God's work and walk in one another's story and **to listen** to what the Spirit says **to live** the call of Jesus today.

# Spiritual Conversation

Peer mentoring happens in small group spending time for conversation to hear one another's experience receive and respond with grace.


Sitting at the **Ted Talk Conference** about leadership can't replace sharing in **Table Talk Conversation** about life. Peer mentoring is a spiritual transforming community to listen and learn from one another's wisdom.



## Spiritual Contemplation

Contemplation is “a long loving look at the real” (Walter Burghardt). Peer mentoring is a sacred place to gaze attentively to the reality of human story and receive it with grace. We listen, look, and linger for a while to love the other because of the presence of grace in the reality of human life-leadership.





The power of spiritual mentoring is the powerlessness of mentors to change others. It is easier to pass on skills of leadership but only the Holy Spirit can produce spiritual life. **Spiritual mentoring is learning the paradox of power in powerlessness.**

The joy of mentoring is to participate in the present work of the Holy Spirit to help one another **see God's presence** and **seek God's purpose** where we are.



## Not So With You

The challenge for leader development remains. The disciples struggled to compete for position and power beside Jesus Christ (Mk 10:32-45).

The world's leaders seek to lord it over by becoming great. But “not so with you” because Jesus Christ modelled servant leadership by grace. Informal mentoring helps sustain the call to live and lead like Jesus.

## Questions:

- ▶ What worldly cultural practices of leadership are commonly seen among pastoral leaders in your community?
- ▶ In what ways godly mentors have influenced you to live and lead like Jesus?
- ▶ How will you integrate peer mentoring in your life and ministry?

