

STUDY GUIDE

Mentoring for Ministry: The Grace of Growing Pastors
Edited by Craig T. Kocher, Jason Byassee, and James C. Howell

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This Study Guide has been prepared for your use in connection with your reading of *Mentoring for Ministry*.

“Personal Reflection” provides questions for the reader—whether student, supervisor, or mentor—to use during private time. Although the “personal reflection” is indeed “personal,” thoughts from this reflection could be brought into the collegial conversation.

“Collegial Conversation” is for supervisors, mentors, and students in conversation together, or for group use. The questions have been shaped from selected ideas and phrases within each chapter. Of course, there are other parts of the chapter you also may want to discuss.

“Fruit-Bearing Action” is exactly that, an “action” that one might do to further learning and ministry.

The Study Guide is organized by chapters.

INTRODUCTION/CONTRIBUTORS

Personal Reflection

1. The editors describe the interrelationship of many of the authors. However, the book is not intended for us only to give attention to the authors. We see Martin Marty's interest in a one-year-old child. When have you received someone's undivided attention?
2. "God can use any of us to bless somebody else" (xi). By whom have you been blessed?

Collegial Conversation

1. Jason Byassee, speaking for co-editors Craig Kocher and James Howell, uses the image of basketball to describe the beginnings of their mentoring relationship. What images of mentoring relationships do you bring to the beginning of these collegial conversations?
2. The editors say they speak with accents southern and Methodist. "Everyone comes from somewhere" (xi). From where do you come? What "accents" do you speak?

Fruit-Bearing Activity

1. As you read through the list of contributing authors, note the backgrounds of each, to which you will want to refer when you read their chapters.

CHAPTER 1. MENTORING THE MOTHER OF GOD

Personal Reflection

1. “God’s grace erases the disgrace of human beings” (2). Reflect upon Elizabeth. How do you identify (or not) with being barren, being humiliated, being faithful, being pitied, being advanced in soul? Ponder Elizabeth and her position. Ponder her role and her call. Ponder your own.
2. “How can this be that I, unworthy as I am, can be a vessel of the Christ?” (3) Reflect upon Mary. How does God minister to her fears? To your fears? Hear Mary say, *Ad Sum*, “Let it be to me” according to your word. Whether you are a man or a woman, to what in the world does God want you to give birth?

Collegial Conversation

1. The story of Christ’s incarnation (Luke 1:26 ff.) begins, “In the sixth month . . .” The sixth month of what? The year? The reign of King Herod? Rather, it is the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth when the angel is sent to Mary. How amazing! Draw out from the chapter the relationship of these two women and its significance for mentoring. What is its significance for the nature of salvation?
2. Mary sets out on the journey to be with Elizabeth. While it takes two to form an authentic mentoring relationship (5) and some assigned supervisors will become mentors and some will not, how could a mentee contribute toward unlocking a door toward genuine growth?
3. Elizabeth’s welcome is extravagant hospitality. “Faithful mentors like Elizabeth have open doors and open ears” (6). Describe to one another what that looks like, sounds like, and feels like.
4. Author Jeremy Troxler adds two sections at the end of the chapter, one briefly on practices and one on the need for wise mentoring in a world which is still sexist. What oppressive issues have you seen and experienced? As men and women mentors and mentees, how can we face inequality and then model change in our churches and our world?

Fruit-Bearing Activity

1. "Blessed are you and blessed is the fruit of your womb," says Elizabeth to Mary. And then she remains silent, so Mary can sing her freedom song, the Magnificat (8). Take those verses, Luke 1: 46-55, and write a contemporary freedom song of the Savior's strong, merciful work in the world today.

CHAPTER 2. LUCKY, AND PROMISCUOUS

Personal Reflection

1. Whether a “sage, friend, counselor, guide, or mentor,” (17), with whom do you consult in making important life decisions?
2. Surprisingly, the author, while finding other books and people helpful, has not found books on ministerial leadership useful. What books on church, ministerial, and pastoral leadership have you found helpful?

Collegial Conversation

1. Author James Howell found his mentor to be “extremely busy and yet always available” (17). How does one receive from God and give to another the “grace of availability; the surprise of interruptibility; the mercy of time granted”?
2. Although the attempt to “update” the sexist “Behind every great man, there’s a great woman” to “a woman rolling her eyes” is inappropriate humor, we are presented with the helpful, “All of us are great debtors, to many someones” (16). Who are those “someones” in your life?
3. Wise teachers have included for others Reinhold Niebuhr, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Eugene Peterson, Dorothy Day, Elie Wiesel, Evelyn Underhill: share some of your wise teachers.

Fruit-Bearing Activity

1. The author writes that “the best thanks a mentor can receive would be a ministry well-pursued and a life well-lived” (18). He also says that he knows he did not thank his mentor enough. Think of someone you would like to thank in some way. Do it.

CHAPTER 3. THREE PRACTICES

Personal Reflection

1. Consider the difference between trying desperately to “get it right” and being “gradually guided into a ministry context” to be able to experience God’s call (24). Recall and reflect upon times of each.
2. In the mentoring relationship, reflect upon the difference between spiritual friendship, companionship, and mentoring friendship. As mentees live into their own vocations, how might the relationship possibly change over the years into a mutual friendship of peers?

Collegial Conversation

1. The author contrasts doctrine with “feeling at home with God” and warns against indoctrination, which she believes produces legalists, hardening people to the internal movement of the Spirit (23). Discuss “doctrine” from a Lutheran point of view. Talk about The Lutheran Confessions, legalism, the work of the Holy Spirit, and other issues in this chapter from the author’s perspective and your own.
2. Author Elaine Heath is concerned about a “competitive climate” among clergy and that “strict professional boundaries” are meant to keep institutions from lawsuits. Look at the Gospels to discover Christ’s life together with all kinds of people. Thinking about Paul and the Epistles, how can we develop trust, create healthy boundaries, and foster role clarity for collaborative ministry?
3. How can ministry in community incorporate apprenticeship which includes participation, authority, and debriefing?

Fruit-Bearing Activity

1. As you “gaze upon the One who gazes upon you with infinite love” (30), consider one specific way you could continue to cultivate your life of prayer.

CHAPTER 4. AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I SEND YOU: MENTORING IN THE LIGHT OF JESUS' ASCENSION

Personal Reflection

1. The author writes about people having a “lurking fear that someone’s going to find out, publicly or privately, that you’re a fraud, and you have no idea what you’re talking about” (32). Have you ever had such a fear? Something similar? Explore that fear.
2. The author also writes that a mentor is to “create a place of growth and discovery in which a person can learn, change, practice, and experiment.” Have you had such a place? Reflect on what such a place is or what it would be like.

Collegial Conversation

1. Author Samuel Wells describes Jesus as the good teacher (34). Discuss good teaching as presented here. Looking through a Lutheran lens, discuss Christology from another perspective than that of “Jesus as the Good Teacher.” Likewise discuss the meaning of Ascension Day and Pentecost from a theological perspective.
2. Throughout the chapter, by giving his personal advice and lists, the author presents several different aspects of mentoring, such as directing, coaching, advising, encouraging, giving examples, giving feedback, supporting, affirming, training, and delegating. What others did you see? Discuss how these approaches can be used and their value.

Fruit-Bearing Activity

1. Take one of the actions from #2 above, for example, “to advise,” “to encourage,” or “to train,” that you feel might be a growing edge for you and put it into practice.

CHAPTER 5. LESSONS IN CHANGE

Personal Reflection

1. “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4). How do you stay grounded, so you can bear fruit?
2. “Stay on your knees and in the Book” (43). Among the many responsibilities of your call, what does this centering mean to you?

Collegial Conversation

1. Civil Rights leader Benjamin Hooks said, “If you think you are leading and turn around to see that no one is following, then you are only taking a walk” (40). Author Prince Rivers adds that if we lead without wise mentors, we are headed for trouble. Discuss these two opening statements.
2. What is the cost to leaders who surround themselves with and listen only to people who boost the leaders’ own egos? (41) What is the cost to the communities they are leading?
3. What do you think the author of this chapter is trying to say about change? How would you say it? What would you say to the author?

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. “Sometimes mentors come into our life and we do not receive them, believing they do not know enough to be helpful” (41). As mentor or mentee, think of ways to change this situation.

CHAPTER 6 THE GIFTS OF MENTORS IN MINISTRY

Personal Reflection

1. In this chapter the narrative presents mentees as young people and mentors as older people. What are some of the many age variables in mentoring, supervisory, and teaching relationships?
2. “In a cruciform faith, sometimes it’s difficult to tell the difference between success and failure” (56). What are some experiences in your own life of cruciform faith?

Collegial Conversation

1. Indeed, “ministry in the name of Jesus is too demanding for solo performance.” Author Will Willimon uses the “two by two” of Luke 10:1-16 to illustrate mentoring. How might it also illustrate partnership? In both cases, discuss the role of conversation over time and the daring willingness to be changed?
2. What is the difference between leadership as the “art of talking people into things” and courageous listening which leads to “procreativity”?
3. Discuss the exercise of power in the mentoring relationship.
4. On page 56 the author mentions not only the importance of confidentiality but also the gift of confession and forgiveness. How are both important?

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. Select a book or two from the substantial bibliography at the end of this chapter to expand your learning. Willimon has written many books. Check out some of them, such as: *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016); *Who Lynched Willie Earle: Preaching to Confront Racism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2017).

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 7—LEIGHTON FORD: ARTIST OF THE SOUL AND FRIEND ON THE JOURNEY

Personal Reflection

1. At whatever stage of life you are in, whose ministry would you consider to be “whole-life” and even “life-long”?

Collegial Conversation

1. In Christ we do not consider some ministries “grand” and some “humble”; however, some people do talk about people, even themselves or us, that way. What do you think about that? What do you say to people about that?
2. Author Ken Shigematsu uses the poetic phrase, “an artist of the soul and a friend on the journey.” Paraphrase that in your own words.

CHAPTER 7: MENTORING: THE MINISTRY OF A LIFETIME

Personal Reflection

1. With whom have you had long walks and talks, either literally or figuratively. What kind of “holy listening” did you do?
2. “God is an artist. God doesn’t do copies. God does originals” (72). How do you think God has or will do something new through you?

Collegial Conversation

1. Author Leighton Ford writes his chapter through telling stories of his long life. Some of his images about mentoring include opening a door, setting an example, entrusting a major responsibility, and putting an arm around someone’s shoulder. What are your images from the stories of your life?
2. Our identity is not in our role. Our identity is in Christ. How does that free us to change roles to serve others?
3. Ford describes forming mentoring groups (68-69). What components of community were important for these groups? What would you add?
4. Amid “frenzied busyness” and distracted lives, “pressures, from without and within, where can leaders go for safe places and times of renewal?” (71)

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. Thinking about a group to which you belong (or one you might become part of in the future), how can you help it be or become a healthy community for real growth during frenzied busyness and distraction?

CHAPTER 8: MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Personal Reflection

1. A *Doktorvater* (or *Doktormütter*) is a supervisor for a doctoral candidate. Jason Byassee writes of a *Doktorvater* who revoked his blessing. Whether a doctoral candidate or not, what *Doktorvater* or *Doktormütter* have you had in academic life who has given you a blessing and not taken it back?
2. “Churches haven’t so much raged into obsolescence as they have snored into it.” What do you think about the statement that being boring is a worse sin than being a heretic? (80)

Collegial Conversation

1. A contextual education placement is established and approved. Author Jason Byassee writes that a “mentoring relationship has to be voluntary just as friendship must be chosen rather than imposed” (75). He adds the importance of the elements of authority and expertise as well as a sense of shared adventure and being fellow travelers. Talk about these.
2. This chapter is filled with church fathers and patriarchal hierarchy, stating also that “mentoring necessarily assumes hierarchy” (76). The church is presented as mother and beloved bride of Christ. (One example of a female mentor is presented only late in the chapter.) What can you contribute to the discussion of this chapter from the perspective of feminist theology?
3. “My own story is the readiest set of examples I have.” “The gospel doesn’t have to pass through me to get to the church.” These statements are debated on page 77. What do you think?

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. Augustine (84-86) had extra places set at his table and was more delighted by conversations than by food and drink. Consider Augustine when you set your own table.

CHAPTER 9: MENTORED BY THE SPIRIT: THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Personal Reflection

1. When you sit for prayer in silence, do you sometimes feel like your mind holds a hundred dancing monkeys swooping and hollering around? (88) Let “Mary” quiet you and ask, “Where are you with God right now?” Start wherever you want.
2. When you feel lonely, isolated, or abandoned, to whom do you dare to turn who is unafraid of real people and *their* fears?

Collegial Conversation

1. We walk into the front door of Mary’s house and actually see *her*, not just the writer. What does it mean for Mary to provide a healing space of listening to God and caring for Melanie? How can you be really present to people, assuring them that their lives matter to God and mentoring them into a life of faith?
2. How are covenant groups, retreats, spiritual direction, conversations with mentors, or other mutual relationships all differently important?
3. Author Melanie Dobson shares that at age 27 she needed to journey into a new life as a person with a chronic disease, a neurological condition. How do we—those of us who live with disabilities and those of us who are temporarily able-bodied—respond to Jesus’ question: “What do you want me to do for you?”

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. Whether or not you are (or will become) a Spiritual Director, you can open your door and say, “Welcome, I’m so glad you have come. Would you like a tea? Let’s settle in and allow God to speak to us . . .”

CHAPTER 10: A GOOD WORK HAS BEGUN IN YOU: MENTORING COLLEGE STUDENTS FOR MINISTRY

Personal Reflection

1. Kocher understands his “network of mentoring relationships as the activity of grace” and the way God has been visible in his life, drawing him closer to life in the church (95). How do you envision a network of mentoring relationships?
2. The human capacity for self-deception *is* profound (100). What are some of the dissonant ways you narrate your own life story? Every account may hold truth. What is the cohesiveness?

Collegial Conversation

1. Author Craig Kocher shares what he has personally learned from his mentors and from being a mentor. Please respond with you own ideas and from your own experiences to his two statements on page 97: “Timing matters,” and “Trust always matters.”
2. We are regularly to talk about every Christian’s call in baptism (98). Discuss how God gives gifts to each person, not just to ordained people, for vocations in daily life.
3. The great temptation of any mentor is to try to remake the mentee in one’s own image (98). How can we avoid the “sneaky (and often hidden) impulse to live one’s own life through the potential of another”?

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. As suggested on page 101, try crafting a one-sentence mission statement for yourself as you explore vocation (no matter your stage of life). You might want to consider also seeking a “clearness committee” as in the Quaker tradition, realizing that we need “a wider community to help us listen and discern” (102).

CHAPTER 11: KINGDOM MENTORING: A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Personal Reflection

1. Think of someone whom you thought might be “way too busy or awesome” to mentor you. Think of someone who has mentored you “constantly, continually, better than you often realized.”
2. “Perhaps accepting that no one person can be everything to me is a good first step toward accepting that I cannot be everything to anyone else either” (106). What unrealistic expectations do you still carry?

Collegial Conversation

1. Author Sarah Howell cuts through the assumption that mentoring happens only “in some hierarchy of age or knowledge or professional experience” (105-106) to open us up to learning and growing through mutuality and transformative power offered by peers, by friends, and by people who are poor. Discuss the many ways this happens.
2. An aggregate or “crowd” of mentors over time is not the same as a community. Share some communities of mutual life together that have been important to you. How have you been challenged and changed by intentional communities, such as those mentioned on pp. 108-109?
3. United Methodists have a connectional system (110-111). What are similar possibilities in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?
4. What is it like to be mentored by people when you are a minority? When you are taught and shaped by the group with privilege? When you are the one with privilege who is taught (perhaps for the first time) by the “other”?

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. Make a list of the “crowd of mentors” in your own life: over time, in a variety of places, and to different degrees. “Mentoring for ministry in a church seeking to bear witness in a changing world must be based . . . on mutually uplifting relationship enabled by the Spirit” (114).

INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSION

Personal Reflection

1. This book celebrates growth, change, and openness through the concept of conversation. What has been the importance of words and the influence of vibrations in your own growth?

Collegial Conversation

1. What is the distinction between argument and conversation? Author Martin Marty writes that in the former there are winners and losers, while good conversations thrive on questions. How can good conversations lead to livelier and engaging “deep words,” thereby being “*inconclusive*”?
2. Mentoring is not generic. How is it important that it be case-specific and culture-specific? Give examples of what that means and how it can be helpful.
3. Marty does not use his “Inconclusive Conclusion” to “wrap knuckles” and appreciates the authors locating themselves. However, he does note that *some* chapters in the book make clear women’s renewal in their traditions. He also encourages ever more and broader ecumenism and catholicity. How would you add these perspectives?

Fruit-Bearing Action

1. “Finitude,” “Contingency,” and “Transience” (118). Take your choice and find yourself chosen!