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Transformational Leadership Through Pastoral Mentoring

Developing Emerging Leaders in the Local Church

By
Eric Phillips

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry.

Saint Louis, Missouri

2026

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Graduation Date May 15, 2026

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how pastors use transformational leadership mentoring to foster the spiritual and ministry growth of emerging leaders in the local church. The study focused on pastors serving in mid-sized Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregations in western Pennsylvania and examined how they described their mentoring practices, the ways they developed emerging leaders, and the outcomes they perceived.

This study employed qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with six senior pastors who were actively engaged in mentoring emerging leaders. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling based on their ministry experience and involvement in leadership development. Interview data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns across the participants' responses.

The findings showed that pastoral mentoring is best understood as a relational, spiritually grounded, and church-centered process of leadership formation rather than as a detached leadership program. Pastors described mentoring as taking place through shared life, meaningful ministry responsibility, prayer, reflective conversation, and intentional personal investment. The findings also showed that pastors understood leadership formation as dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit and observed outcomes such as spiritual growth, ministry confidence, leadership readiness, and multiplication as emerging leaders began investing in others.

The study concludes that transformational leadership mentoring provides a meaningful framework for understanding how pastors foster the spiritual and ministry growth of emerging leaders in the local church. That framework, however, must remain

subject to biblical and theological convictions. The findings offer practical insight for churches seeking to develop leaders through relationships, theological clarity, meaningful ministry experience, reflective conversation, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The study also points to the need for further research across other denominational settings, through the perspective of mentees, and in relation to the theological dimensions of leadership formation.

To Annette, my beloved wife and faithful partner in life and ministry; to Leia, my sweet daughter, whose kisses, hugs, and back rubs at the kitchen table carried me through this work; to Caleb, my son, whose sharp mind and steady encouragement kept me from giving up; to Micah, for taking care of the dogs; to Gabby and Joshua, for their patience, support, and the quiet they gave me while I finished this project; to Mt. Carmel Evangelical Presbyterian Church, for its faithful support; and to Memorial Park Church, that the fruit of this labor might serve Christ and bring glory to His Name.

"God might himself have performed this work, if he had chosen; but he has committed it to the ministry of men."

— John Calvin, Commentary on Ephesians 4:12.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Philip Douglass for his guidance, encouragement, and steady oversight throughout this dissertation process. He has been, in many ways, a mentor of mentors, and I am thankful for the wisdom, example, and care he brought to this work. I am also sincerely thankful to Dr. Janet C. Zellmann for her careful editorial assistance in strengthening the final manuscript. Her insightful comments and occasional wit made the revision process both sharper and more enjoyable. I am grateful to my friend, mentor, teammate, and confidant, Dr. Brian Hutchinson, for his generosity throughout our long friendship and for his continual reminder to return to the essentials, often in the spirit of Lombardi's famous line, "This is a football." I am likewise thankful to Dr. Tom Gibbs and for the Covenant Seminary Level Five Leadership Cohort, whose encouragement, fellowship, and shared labor made this journey lighter and richer.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Christian leadership has always been central to the life, health, and mission of the church. Within the Reformed tradition, pastoral leadership is understood as a divine calling rooted in Scripture, shaped by theological conviction, and expressed through shepherding care. Yet one of the most persistent challenges facing churches today is the formation of emerging leaders who are spiritually mature, biblically shaped, and practically equipped for ministry. Many pastors report significant gaps in ministry preparation, particularly in areas related to leadership, conflict, delegation, and the practical demands of church ministry.[1] The consequences of this gap are significant, affecting congregational health, ministry continuity, and long-term mission effectiveness.

At the same time, churches increasingly recognize the need for more intentional investment in the next generation of ministry leaders. Many pastors report that identifying suitable young leaders is becoming more difficult, even as their congregations seek to train and develop them. These relational and developmental pathways often remain underdeveloped in the local church. Leadership development often becomes programmatic rather than personal, instructional rather than relational, and occasional rather than continuous. The result is a church culture that hopes emerging leaders will

[1] Barna Group, *The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2017), 65, 67.

develop organically rather than intentionally, despite the biblical pattern of deliberate pastoral mentoring.[2]

Scripture presents a consistent vision of leadership reproduction: Moses mentoring Joshua, Elijah preparing Elisha, Jesus shaping the disciples, and Paul cultivating men like Timothy and Titus. These narratives reveal that biblical leadership development is not accidental. Rather, it is relational, embodied, and mission driven. Reformed theology affirms this emphasis. Theologian John Calvin argues that ministers must entrust sound doctrine to faithful men who are fitted to carry on the work after their death, underscoring the pastoral responsibility to develop future leaders for the sake of the church's ongoing faithfulness.[3] In this view, leadership is not primarily about personal effectiveness but about stewarding the growth of others.

Modern leadership theory contributes an additional layer of insight. Transformational leadership, one of the most widely studied and empirically supported models, emphasizes behaviors that inspire, develop, equip, and empower others. Bernard Bass and Ronald Riggio describe transformational leaders as those who "stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity."[4] Though transformational leadership theory is not distinctively Christian in origin, it may still be received as a matter of common grace because it describes leadership patterns that overlap with biblical truth. This emphasis

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[2] Barna Group, *State of Pastors*, 86-88.

[3] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 209.

[4] Bernard M. Bass. Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 2nd ed. (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 3.

also aligns with pastoral ministry, where leaders are called not only to shepherd and teach but also to cultivate disciples who become spiritual leaders themselves.

The convergence of these biblical, theological, and leadership principles points toward mentoring as a central practice for pastoral leadership. Mentoring integrates the relational elements of shepherding, the developmental focus of transformational leadership, and the discipleship mandate of the local church. Dr. Phil A. Newton writes, "The life-on-life relationship of mentors with trainees centered in local communities of Christ-followers remains the best way to shape a new generation of healthy Christian leaders."[5] When pastors mentor emerging leaders, they embody the Apostle Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:2 and contribute to a culture of ongoing leadership multiplication.

Yet despite the strong biblical and theological rationale, many pastors struggle to practice mentoring consistently. Barriers such as time constraints, lack of models, unclear expectations, and congregational culture all contribute to the challenge. This study seeks to explore how pastors who do mentor emerging leaders understand and practice transformational leadership in their mentoring relationships. By examining the lived experiences of pastors, this research aims to provide insight into how mentoring can strengthen both spiritual and ministry formation in the local church.

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[5] Phil A. Newton, *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2017), 26.

This chapter introduces the study by presenting the background and challenges, purpose statement, research questions, significance of the study, and key definitions that guide the research. Together, these elements form the foundation for the exploration of mentoring and transformational leadership in pastoral ministry.

The Background

The need for effective leadership development in the church has become increasingly urgent. Many churches face significant challenges in identifying, preparing, and developing emerging leaders for meaningful ministry responsibility. Research across evangelical contexts also suggests that pastors perceive important gaps in ministry preparation and increasing difficulty in cultivating future leaders.[6] This convergence of trends contributes to a widespread leadership deficit, one with theological, practical, and missional implications.

Biblical Foundations for Mentoring

The biblical narrative consistently frames leadership development as a relational and intentional process. Moses invested deeply in Joshua over the decades, preparing him for the monumental task of leading Israel into the promised land. Elijah formed Elisha not only through instruction but also through shared ministry experiences, culminating in the passing of the prophetic mantle (2 Kgs. 2:1-14). Eli mentored Samuel, shaping his ability to discern the voice of God (1 Sam. 3). Jesus dedicated a significant part of His

[6] Barna Group, *State of Pastors*, 65, 67, 86-88.

public ministry to forming twelve disciples, living with them, teaching them, and modeling the kingdom of God (Mark 3:14). Paul mentored Timothy and Titus, entrusting them with pastoral responsibilities and urging Timothy to entrust the gospel "to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). These examples demonstrate several consistent patterns: long-term relational investment; shared experiences in ministry contexts; modeling of character, not just skills; delegation and empowerment for leadership; and formation of leaders who will form other leaders. Mentoring, therefore, is not merely a modern leadership strategy but a biblical mandate embedded in the fabric of God's redemptive work.

Reformed Shepherding Theology

The Reformed tradition places significant emphasis on pastoral shepherding. Calvin saw pastoral ministry as a calling to equip the saints for the work of ministry and cultivating godliness through example, teaching, and relational care. His commentary on 2 Timothy stresses the need for pastors to raise up others who will continue church ministry.[7] Dr. Timothy Whitmer's shepherd-leader model emphasizes four central tasks: knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting the flock.[8] All four responsibilities are inherently relational, making mentoring a natural extension of shepherding.

Dr. Timothy Keller adds that leadership formation in the church takes place in shared life, worship, and mission of the local congregation. It is not merely

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[7] Calvin, *Commentaries Epistles to Timothy*, 209.

[8] Timothy Z. Witmer, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 213-214.

administrative, but deeply spiritual and relational. In Keller's vision, the local church is the primary environment in which leaders are formed to serve both the church and the world.[9]

The Contemporary Leadership Crisis in Churches

Despite these theological convictions, many pastors report struggling to mentor emerging leaders.[10] The exodus of younger adults from congregational life, combined with complex ministry demands, leaves many pastors feeling overwhelmed. Additionally, leadership training is often programmatic rather than relational, younger leaders desire authenticity and shared life, not just tasks; churches may lack intentional systems for identifying and developing emerging leaders; pastors may not have been mentored themselves, leaving them without models to emulate; and time constraints and pastoral burnout reduce capacity for relational investment. As Newton argues, life-on-life mentoring in the local church remains one of the most important ways to form a new generation of healthy Christian leaders.[11]

Transformational Leadership as a Framework

Transformational leadership provides a helpful lens through which to understand how pastors can mentor emerging leaders. Bass and Riggio describe four core components in their four I's: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual

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[9] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 46-48, 51-52.

[10] Barna Group*, 7-Year Trends: Pastors Feel More Loneliness and Less Support*, July 12, 2023.

[11] Newton, *Mentoring Church*, 26.

stimulation, and individualized consideration.[12] Each of these dimensions has relevance for pastoral mentoring, as pastors model character, cast vision, foster reflection, and give personal attention to emerging leaders. In that sense, transformational leadership provides a useful framework for understanding how pastors form other leaders through mentoring.

The Challenges

The consequences of inconsistent leadership development in the local church are significant. When pastors do not intentionally mentor emerging leaders, several negative outcomes emerge that affect the church's health, sustainability, and mission.

First, churches become overly dependent on a small number of leaders. Without intentional development, ministry responsibility concentrates on the hands of a few individuals. These individuals are often the senior pastor and a limited number of leaders. This dynamic creates instability. If one or two key leaders leave, retire, or experience burnout, the church struggles to maintain ministry continuity. Barna's research suggests that effective pastoral leadership requires recognizing one's weaknesses and empowering others to accept the ministry slack.[13]

Second, congregational discipleship becomes shallow and fragmented. When leadership development is neglected, churches often rely on ministry participation without intentional spiritual formation. Emerging leaders may be given tasks without being shepherded in character, doctrine, or gospel identity. As Paul David Tripp argues, lasting change does not come through outward behavioral adjustment alone, but through

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[12] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5-7.

[13] Barna Group, *State of Pastors*, 104.

heart-level transformation.[14] This produces workers who are busy but not deeply rooted. Over time, such patterns weaken the church's ability to cultivate mature disciples who can lead with wisdom, humility, and theological depth.

Third, pastoral burnout increases when pastors carry the burden of ministry without sharing responsibility. Many pastors already struggle with loneliness, fatigue, and the pressure of complex ministry demands.[15] Without other leaders being intentionally developed, the weight of pastoral care, administration, discipleship, and leadership remains concentrated on too few shoulders. This not only limits the church's capacity for ministry but also increases the likelihood of pastoral exhaustion. Intentional mentoring can serve as one means of distributing ministry responsibility and building resilience in the leadership culture of the church.

Fourth, mission effectiveness declines. Churches without empowered leaders struggle to maintain existing ministries, let alone pursue new missional efforts. Keller argues that new church planting is "the best way to increase the number of believers in a city, and one of the best ways to renew the whole body of Christ."[16] Without intentional mentoring, the church is less able to reproduce the leadership necessary for effective mission.

Finally, congregations fail to cultivate a culture of imitation, a key biblical theme in Reformed theology. Scripture repeatedly presents leaders as examples to be followed,

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[14] Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 41-44.

[15] Barna Group, *State of Pastors*, 149-151.

[16] Keller, *Center Church,* 365.

calling believers to "be imitators" of faithful leaders (1 Cor. 11:1), to keep their eyes on those who walk according to a godly example (Phil. 3:17), and to imitate the faith of their leaders after considering the outcome of their way of life (Heb. 13:7). When pastors do not intentionally mentor others, new believers and emerging leaders may lack visible, embodied models of faithful ministry. As Timothy Whitmer puts it, pastoral leadership must ask, "Can you say, together with the apostle Paul, 'Follow me as I follow Christ'?"[17] Without this kind of visible and imitable leadership, leadership can become abstract, functional, or purely programmatic rather than personal, relational, and formational.

The cost of neglecting pastoral mentoring, therefore, is not merely organizational inefficiency but spiritual diminishment. Churches lose continuity, pastors lose capacity, emerging leaders lose opportunity, and congregations lose momentum in their mission. For that reason, this study begins with the conviction that intentional mentoring, shaped by transformational leadership, is biblical, theological, and a practical necessity for the local church.

Purpose Statement

Pastors and church leaders increasingly recognize that cultivating emerging leaders is essential for the long-term vitality of congregational life. While Scripture consistently presents leadership development as a pastoral responsibility (2 Tim. 2:2; Eph. 4:11-12), many churches struggle to form new leaders with the spiritual maturity, theological depth, and ministry competence required for contemporary ministry contexts.

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[17] Whitmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 214.

Numerous studies highlight widespread concerns about leadership shortages and gaps in ministry preparedness among emerging leaders.[18] These challenges have heightened interest in mentoring as a central practice for shaping future leaders. Yet despite a growing body of literature on Christian leadership development and mentoring, the specific ways pastors engage in mentoring practices, particularly those aligned with transformational leadership, remain insufficiently examined.[19]

Transformational leadership theory provides a compelling framework for understanding how pastors foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth. Bass and Riggio identify four interrelated components (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) that together foster deep personal and organizational transformation.[20] Scholars have noted that transformational leadership's emphasis on relational influence, individualized care, and growth resonates strongly with Christian discipleship and pastoral formation.[21] However, existing literature focuses primarily on organizational or corporate contexts and seldom examines how pastors embody transformational leadership specifically through mentoring relationships in the local church. As a result, the pastoral expressions of transformational leadership mentoring, how it is practiced, interpreted, and experienced, remain insufficiently described in current research.

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[18] Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 19-25.

[19] J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development,* 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 43-46.

[20] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5-7.

[21] Reggie McNeal, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders,* updated ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 115-116, 120-122.

The Reformed pastoral tradition further emphasizes shepherding, discipleship, and equipping the saints as essential dimensions of ministry leadership. This theological framework understands mentoring as more than a technique or leadership tool; it is a relational context in which pastors invest personally in emerging leaders' spiritual, character, and ministry development. For example, Whitmer emphasizes shepherding as the central pastoral framework for leadership.[22] Newton, by contrast, stresses life-on-life mentoring within the local church as a primary means of forming healthy Christian leaders.[23] These differing emphases suggest that, even within the broader Reformed and pastoral literature, mentoring is described in complementary but not always identical ways.

Furthermore, qualitative research is especially valuable for highlighting the lived experiences of ministry practitioners. Because mentoring is inherently relational, contextual, and personal, qualitative exploration is particularly suited to uncover the nuances often overlooked in programmatic or prescriptive approaches.[24] By listening to the voices of pastors who actively mentor emerging leaders, this study seeks to bring to light the convictions, practices, and relational dynamics that shape their mentoring work. Such an approach contributes to mentoring literature by filling a gap between theoretical models of leadership and the on-the-ground realities of pastoral mentoring.

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[22] Whitmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 2-6, 213-214.

[23] Newton, *Mentoring Church*, 23-26.

[24] John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 27-35.

Therefore, this study focuses narrowly on the intersection of transformational leadership and pastoral mentoring. It does not evaluate the effectiveness of specific mentoring programs, nor does it measure outcomes quantitatively. Instead, it aims to describe how pastors understand and practice mentoring in ways that reflect transformational leadership principles.[25] This focus allows the study to address the convictions, practices, and relational dynamics that shape pastoral mentoring in the local church.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how pastors use transformational leadership mentoring to foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth.

Research Questions

This study employed qualitative methods to explore how pastors understand and practice transformational leadership mentoring with emerging leaders. Because qualitative research seeks to describe lived experience rather than test hypotheses or evaluate programs, the research questions were designed to focus narrowly on pastors' perspectives, practices, and observations. These questions also align closely with the purpose of the study, guiding the collection and analysis of interview data.

The following questions guided the research:

1. How do pastors describe their experiences of using transformational leadership mentoring with emerging leaders?
2. In what ways do pastors practice mentoring that supports emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth?

[25] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5-7; Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology Qualitative Research*, 27-35.

3. What outcomes do pastors perceive in emerging leaders because of these mentoring relationships?

These questions center the study on the descriptions and experiences pastors provided, ensuring that the findings reflect their voice and the realities of mentoring within the local church.

Significance of The Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to strengthen pastoral ministry and leadership development in the local church. As pastors seek to cultivate emerging leaders in an increasingly complex ministry environment, the insights gained from this research may provide concrete guidance for nurturing spiritually mature, mission-oriented leaders. Because this study focuses on pastors lived experiences with transformational leadership mentoring, its findings have the capacity to offer both theological reflection and practical ministry strategies. This study may also contribute to long-term ministry sustainability by helping churches develop healthier leadership pipelines and more supportive mentoring cultures. The following subsections describe the theological, practical, and pastoral significance of this study and explain how various ministry stakeholders may benefit from the findings.

Theological Significance

This study is theologically significant because it explores how pastors live out biblical patterns of leadership formation through mentoring. Throughout Scripture, God develops leaders through intentional relationships, personal investment, and modeling.

By including pastors' descriptions of how they mentor emerging leaders, this study offers a renewed understanding of mentoring as a theological practice rooted in discipleship, imitation, and spiritual formation. The findings may help pastors connect their mentoring efforts more deeply to their understanding of pastoral identity, calling, and shepherding.

The study also contributes to the theological conversation in the Reformed tradition. Reformed pastoral theology emphasizes shepherding, equipping the saints, and forming leaders who can faithfully serve the church across generations. This research may illuminate how transformational leadership mentoring aligns with these commitments and how it supports the work of nurturing future leaders. The findings could help pastors articulate a more integrated theology of mentoring, one that brings together pastoral care, discipleship, leadership development, and the ongoing ministry of the local church.

Furthermore, the study may help bridge the gap between theology and leadership practice. Pastors often desire to mentor emerging leaders yet struggle to translate theological convictions into daily ministry rhythms. By describing how pastors understand and implement mentoring, the study may offer the church a clearer theological rationale for mentoring as an essential means of ministry multiplication and spiritual formation. It may also help pastors see mentoring as a natural extension of their theological convictions and pastoral calling.

Practical Significance for Churches

Churches face increasing leadership demands in a rapidly changing culture. Many congregations experience leadership shortages, inconsistent development strategies, and

uncertainty about how to prepare the next generation for ministry. This study offers practical insights that churches can use to strengthen their leadership culture. The findings may provide churches with a clearer understanding of how mentoring relationships can be structured, supported, and sustained over time.

Drawing on the themes that pastors describe, the study may help churches identify practices that contribute to healthier leadership pipelines, such as creating intentional relational settings, delegating meaningful responsibility, and cultivating cultures of trust and encouragement. Churches may also discover new ways to support pastoral mentoring efforts through organizational alignment, team collaboration, and opportunities for shared ministry. In addition, the research can help congregations consider how mentoring strengthens ministry teams, enhances volunteer engagement, and fosters a deeper sense of mission among emerging leaders.

The study also has the potential to inform church leaders seeking to navigate transitions. By investing in emerging leaders, churches become better equipped to respond to pastoral changes, ministry expansion, and new ministry initiatives. The findings may guide churches as they develop succession plans and strategies for long-term ministry sustainability.

Practical Significance for Pastors

For pastors, this study offers practical wisdom drawn from the experiences of peers who actively mentor emerging leaders. Many pastors desire to mentor but struggle with knowing how to begin, how to structure mentoring conversations, or how to balance mentoring with competing ministry demands. The findings of this research may provide

pastors with concrete strategies, relational practices, and leadership rhythms that support faithful and effective mentoring.

Pastors may also gain clarity about the kinds of relational investments that emerging leaders find most helpful. Insights from the study could help pastors better discern the needs, strengths, and readiness of emerging leaders, enabling more personalized and fruitful mentoring relationships. Additionally, pastors may discover new ways to integrate theological reflection, pastoral identity, and leadership development into their mentoring work.

By highlighting the lived experiences of pastors committed to mentoring, the study may encourage other pastors to view mentoring not as an optional activity but as a central expression of their calling. The findings may also help pastors grow in confidence as they seek to invest in the formation of the next generation of ministry leaders.

Ministry Innovation and Sustainability

Finally, the study carries significance for the long-term sustainability and innovation of ministry in the local church. Churches that invest intentionally in emerging leaders are better equipped to adapt to cultural changes, engage in mission, and sustain ministry vitality across generations. By describing how pastors practice transformational leadership mentoring, this study may help churches rethink how they prepare leaders for future ministry challenges.

The findings may also inspire new ministry initiatives that support leadership development, such as mentoring networks, residency programs, or structured pathways for leadership formation. By identifying practices that pastors find effective, the research

may offer a foundation for ministries seeking to cultivate a healthy culture of mentorship and leadership multiplication. The study has the potential to help churches strengthen their mission and impact by forming leaders who are spiritually grounded, relationally connected, and prepared for the demands of ministry.

Definition of Terms

In this study, several key terms are used with specific meanings to ensure clarity and consistency. Definitions are drawn from the literature on pastoral ministry, mentoring, and leadership theory and are adapted where necessary for the purposes of this research.

Transformational leadership is a model developed primarily by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio that emphasizes influencing followers through modeling, vision, intellectual stimulation, and personal investment. Bass and Riggio describe transformational leaders as those who inspire commitment to shared goals and foster deep personal growth in followers.[26] In this study, the term refers to a leadership framework that helps explain how pastors mentor emerging leaders through example, encouragement, reflection, and personal investment. This framework includes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Mentoring refers to an intentional, relational process in which a more experienced leader invests in the spiritual, personal, and ministry development of an emerging leader. For this study, mentoring refers to relational engagement through guidance, modeling,

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[26] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 3.

spiritual reflection, and opportunities for leadership practice. It is distinguished from coaching, which is more skill focused, and supervision, which is more task or accountability focused, because of its emphasis on holistic formation.

Emerging leaders are individuals in the local church who demonstrate potential for increased ministry responsibility and spiritual influence. They may be new believers growing rapidly, volunteers stepping into greater service, young adults discerning a call to ministry, or staff preparing for expanded leadership. This study uses the term broadly to describe individuals who exhibit teachability, spiritual hunger, and early signs of leadership gifting. The term also reflects the early development phases described in leadership emergence theory.[27]

Pastoral leadership refers to the work of shepherding, guiding, and equipping the congregation for the work of ministry. Whitmer describes pastoral leadership through four tasks: knowing, feeding, leading, and protecting the flock.[28] In this study, pastoral leadership includes formal responsibilities, such as teaching, guidance, and oversight, and informal relational investment, which provides the context in which mentoring naturally arises.

Discipleship refers to the relational and transformative process of growing in Christlikeness through teaching, imitation, fellowship, and obedience. Jesus' invitation to "follow me" (Matt. 4:19) establishes discipleship as inherently relational, and Paul's pattern of inviting believers to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1) continues this model. In the context of pastoral ministry, discipleship provides the foundation for

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[27] Clinton, *Making a Leader*, 23-28.

[28] Whitmer, *Shepherd Leader*, 213-214.

mentoring. Mentoring is understood as a focused expression of discipleship directed toward leadership development.[29]

Leadership development is the deliberate process of equipping individuals for increasing levels of ministry responsibility. It includes spiritual formation, character development, ministry training, and theological reflection. In the local church, leadership development is understood as relational, continuous, and integrated into congregational life rather than merely functional or skill based.[30]

The next chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to four primary areas: biblical and Reformed foundations for pastoral mentoring, transformational leadership theory, mentoring theory, and leadership development in the local church. Together, these bodies of literature establish the theological and conceptual framework for the study and offer critical lenses for interpreting pastoral mentoring practices. This literature review lays the groundwork for understanding the themes identified through the lived experiences of pastors as they mentor leaders in the context of local church ministry.

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[29] Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 40-42.

[30] Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 23-25.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore pastoral mentoring as a means of transformational leadership development in the local church. This chapter reviews literature that provides the biblical, theological, and leadership foundations necessary to situate the study in existing scholarship and practice. By examining representative sources that address discipleship, pastoral leadership, mentoring, and leadership development, the literature review establishes the conceptual framework through which pastoral mentoring is understood. This chapter clarifies key themes and assumptions that inform mentoring relationships in the church and establishes the scholarly context in which the present study is situated.

The literature review begins with an analysis of relevant biblical and Reformed theological foundations for pastoral mentoring. Three additional areas of literature focusing on transformational leadership theory, mentoring theory, and leadership development in the local church are reviewed next to establish the broader conceptual foundation. These four areas provide the conceptual and theological grounding for examining pastoral mentoring as a means of developing emerging leaders in the local church.

Biblical and Reformed Theological Foundations for Pastoral Mentoring

Discipleship as a Biblically Defined, Formational Relationship

Scripture consistently presents discipleship as a relational and formational process centered on following Jesus Christ. Jesus establishes this pattern through his call to the disciples, inviting them into sustained proximity, instruction, and imitation (Mark 3:14). This pattern of formative imitation is carried forward in the apostolic ministry of Paul, who exhorts the Corinthian church to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). Similarly, Paul's instruction to Timothy to entrust what he has received to faithful people who will be able to teach others highlights the intentional and generational character of leadership formation within the church (2 Tim. 2:2). Reflecting this biblical emphasis, Michael J. Wilkins argues that discipleship is an ongoing process of becoming like Jesus, underscoring that formation occurs through sustained relationship with Christ rather than through mastery of content alone. [31] Discipleship involves a lifelong journey of following Jesus that reshapes identity, character, and practice through lived experience. From this biblical pattern, pastoral mentoring emerges as an expression of biblical discipleship, as leaders form others through intentional relationships, modeled faithfulness, and shared life in Christ.

The Old Testament likewise portrays leadership formation as a relational and covenantal process that unfolds over time in God's redemptive purposes. Rather than relying on abstract instruction alone, God forms leaders through sustained proximity, faithful presence, and participation in his covenantal work among his people. This pattern

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[31] Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 42.

is evident in Moses' relationship with Joshua, as Joshua remains with Moses, accompanies him in leadership, and is gradually prepared to assume responsibility among the people of God (Exod. 24:13; 33:11; Num. 27:18-23). A similar pattern appears in the prophetic succession from Elijah to Elisha, where formation occurs through shared life and faithful presence, culminating in Elisha's commissioning to carry forward the prophetic ministry (2 Kings 2:1-15). Interpreting these patterns theologically, Geerhardus Vos shows that God's self-revelation unfolds through the progress of redemption and that the covenant marks decisive stages in that history.[32] Although the Old Testament does not consistently employ explicit discipleship terminology, theologian Michael Wilkins observes that "the nature of the prophetic ministry, the scribes, and the wisdom tradition speak strongly of the existence of master-disciple relationships in Israel,"[33] suggesting that relational formation was already embedded in Israel's covenantal life. These biblical and theological patterns show that leadership formation is not a novel New Testament development. It is deeply rooted in the Old Testament pattern of covenantal communion, relational guidance, and faithful imitation among the people of God.

The witness of the Old and New Testaments presents leadership formation as a relational process rooted in God's redemptive purposes and carried forward through lived proximity, faithful imitation, and sustained guidance. From Jesus and Paul to the mentoring relationships evident in Israel's leadership succession, Scripture consistently portrays leaders as being shaped over time through intentional relationships, not by mere

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[32] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 16.

[33] Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel,* 2nd ed. (Wipf and Stock, 2015), 220.

transactional instruction. This unified biblical pattern demonstrates that leadership formation is neither accidental nor episodic but reflects God's deliberate work of preparing his servants for faithful responsibility. This biblical framework presents pastoral mentoring as a practice that participates in God's ongoing formative work among his people.

Reformed biblical theology further deepens the understanding of leadership formation by situating it in God's redemptive purposes in history. Redemptive-historical theology does not treat revelation or leadership development as static or timeless. It emphasizes that God discloses himself and accomplishes his saving work through a deliberate historical process. Vos defines biblical theology as dealing with "the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible,"[34] underscoring that God's redemptive activity unfolds over time rather than appearing in a completed or final form at once. Leadership formation must be understood in this historical progression, as individuals are prepared and shaped according to the stage of God's redemptive work to which they are called. In Scripture, God forms leaders across the covenantal history of his people.

Viewed through redemptive history, leadership formation is shaped by God's deliberate work across time through the unfolding stages of revelation. This perspective leads naturally to Reformed pastoral theology, where leadership formation is understood as rooted in Scripture ordered by God's redemptive work.

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[34] Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5.

Reformed Theological Foundations for the Formation of Leaders

Reformed theological reflection further clarifies leadership formation by emphasizing that those called to shepherd God's people must themselves be shaped through disciplined attention to their own spiritual lives. In the Reformed tradition, pastoral leadership is not reduced to the performance of ministerial duties but is understood as a calling that places sustained moral and spiritual demands upon the leader. Richard Baxter, the seventeenth-century English Puritan pastor and theologian, captures this concern by insisting that "self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian, but it is of a double necessity in a minister,"[35] drawing attention to the heightened spiritual responsibility borne by those entrusted with the care of souls. Pastoral leadership emerges from a life continually shaped by humility, repentance, and faithfulness, as the shepherd's oversight of others is inseparable from the ongoing formation of his own character. Leadership development belongs to the broader Reformed understanding of sanctification. God forms leaders through habits of self-examination and devotion that sustain faithful ministry over time.

Baxter's emphasis on pastoral oversight helps bring Vos's redemptive-historical vision into the life of the church. Leadership formation takes place as pastors faithfully care for the people God has entrusted to them. The shepherd's calling requires careful attentiveness to those entrusted to his care, as well as sustained relational presence rather than distant supervision. Baxter cautions that "when we are commanded to take heed unto all the flock, it is plainly implied that our flock must be ordinarily no greater than we are

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[35] Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor: Updated and Abridged*, ed. Tim Cooper (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 18.

capable of overseeing,"[36] underscoring that pastoral leadership entails an intentional and relational responsibility toward others. This shows that leadership formation in the church unfolds through patient pastoral care in God's redemptive work.

Vos provides the broader theological setting, and Baxter focuses on pastoral oversight, but Wilkins describes the kind of relationship in which such formation ordinarily takes place. Wilkins argues that discipleship in the ancient world involved a personal relationship in which a person attached himself to a teacher to learn from him and live according to his instruction and example.[37] Leaders were formed through close relationships, shared life, and lived for example, not by instruction alone. Alongside Baxter's insistence on watchful pastoral oversight, Wilkins's account makes clear that leadership formation is most faithfully carried forward through intentional, embodied relationships in which life, practice, and identity are shaped over time. Pastoral mentoring serves as a historically grounded and theologically faithful way for leaders to participate in God's ongoing formative work in the church.

These Reformed theological voices frame leadership formation as a relational work grounded in God's redemptive purposes. Vos, Baxter, and Wilkins present leadership in the church as shaped by theological conviction, pastoral responsibility, and intentional relationships. Their combined witness makes clear that leadership development in the church is neither incidental nor merely functional, but a deliberate process shaped by theology, responsibility, and relationship. Pastoral mentoring is a faithful and necessary expression of that work in the life of the local church.

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[36] Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 23.

[37] Wilkins, *Discipleship Matthew's Gospel*, 12, 20-21, 23.

Discipleship, Formation, and Leadership in the Life of the Local Church

Timothy Keller locates discipleship and leadership formation in the ordinary yet profoundly formative life of the local church. He resists approaches that detach leadership development from the relational and missional practices of congregational life. For Keller, Christian formation is not primarily the result of isolated instruction or carefully designed programs. Instead, it unfolds through sustained participation in a gospel-shaped community where truth is taught, modeled, and reinforced over time.[38] The local church serves as the primary setting in which leaders are formed, as believers are shaped through shared worship, intentional relationships, and engagement in God's redemptive mission. In the shared life of the church, leadership development is inseparable from discipleship itself. Leaders emerge not through transactional strategies aimed at rapid expansion, but through formative processes that prioritize depth, presence, and relational investment. Keller's vision presents the local church as the proper context for leadership formation, providing the theological and practical framework in which intentional, reproducible mentoring can faithfully take place.

Paul David Tripp argues that leadership formation must address the deeper work of heart transformation if it is to bear lasting fruit. For Tripp, genuine change is not merely behavioral or skill based; it is redemptive in nature, taking place in the heart where God brings lasting transformation.[39] Mentoring relationships are not tools for managing behavior or improving performance but rather relational spaces in which God

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[38] Timothy J. Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 46-47, 51.

[39] Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 13-14.

works through ordinary believers as instruments of his grace. Because outward actions flow from the heart, leadership formation that neglects inner renewal risks producing external conformity without spiritual depth. Effective mentoring in the local church requires patient, incarnational care. Such mentoring brings God's truth to bear in loving relationships and seeks change at the roots of the heart.[40]

Robert E. Coleman applies this vision of formation in the church and at the level of the heart by showing that leadership development in the church requires intentional, relational investment in a limited number of people over time. Jesus's approach to forming leaders was neither programmatic nor oriented toward immediate results. It was centered on sustained presence, shared life, and careful supervision, as he devoted himself to a few and shaped them through close association before entrusting them with greater responsibility.[41] This pattern shows that leadership formation is personal and patient. It begins by being "with" others long before they are sent to serve. Coleman makes clear that the goal of such investment is not recognition or efficiency. It is the multiplication of faithful leaders whose lives embody and transmit the gospel to others.[42] Intentional mentoring is one means by which the church carries this work forward across generations. It joins the heart-level change Tripp describes with the church-centered formation Keller presents.

Keller, Tripp, and Coleman present a coherent vision of leadership formation that is ecclesial, spiritual, and intentional. Keller locates leadership formation in the life of the

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[40] Tripp, *Instruments Redeemer's Hands*, 20-25.

[41] Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 21-25.

[42] Coleman, *Master Plan Evangelism*, 30-32.

local church, where it is inseparable from participation in a gospel-shaped community in which truth is proclaimed and embodied.[43] Tripp argues that such formation must reach the heart, because lasting change is redemptive in nature.[44] Coleman demonstrates how sustained, relational investment in a few leaders carries that work forward across generations.[45] Pastoral mentoring brings these emphases together in the ordinary work of pastoral ministry. Through it, pastors participate in God's formative work in emerging leaders, which unfolds through presence, patience, and shared life.

Implications for Pastoral Mentoring

When pastoral mentoring is understood as a formational practice rather than an informal or purely relational activity, it becomes a primary means through which leaders are shaped in the life of the local church. Such mentoring does not stop with personal growth. It forms leaders who are prepared to bear responsibility, exercise discernment, and participate faithfully in the church's mission. In his critique of what he terms "coffeeshop discipleship," Mark Seversen cautions against forms of mentoring that prioritize relational warmth without formative direction, arguing that mentoring detached from mission and expectation risks producing stunted maturity instead of developed leaders.[46] Seversen further argues that mission and maturity belong together and should

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[43] Keller, *Center Church*, 46-47, 51.

[44] Tripp, *Instruments Redeemer's Hands*, 13-14.

[45] Coleman, *Master Plan Evangelism*, 24-25, 30-32.

[46] Mark Seversen, "Beyond Coffeeshop Discipleship: The Significance of Mission in Spiritual Formation," *Covenant Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2021): 80-83.

not be treated as sequential stages of Christian growth.[47] Wilkins describes discipleship as committed attachment to a teacher and his way of life. Pastoral mentoring is best understood as a guided, relational process in which emerging leaders are formed through closeness, instruction, and participation.[48] Mentoring becomes a pastorally led pathway of leadership formation to shape character, conviction, and capacity for service through shared life and mission.

Pastoral mentoring carries a distinct responsibility for intentionally forming leaders under the care and authority of the local church. Pastors are not merely facilitators of spiritual growth. They are entrusted with the pastoral task of teaching obedience and modeling faithful patterns of life and leadership in the community of faith. Evert van de Poll argues that evangelization and discipleship belong together in the church's mission, joining gospel proclamation with the pastoral task of teaching believers obedience to Christ.[49] This task includes accountability and example as leaders are formed through sustained guidance, modeling, and oversight in the life of the church.[50] Wilkins describes discipleship as a committed attachment to a teacher and his way of life. Pastoral mentoring is a primary means to identify, shape, and entrust leaders for faithful service.[51] Mentoring is not an optional leadership strategy because it belongs to the ordinary

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[47] Seversen, "Beyond Coffeeshop Discipleship," 81-84.

[48] Wilkins, *Discipleship Matthew's Gospel*, 220-221.

[49] Evert van de Poll, "Mission, Discipleship, and Ethical Issues: Evaluating the Seoul Statement of the Lausanne Congress 2024," *European Journal of Theology* 34, no. 2 (2025): 300.

[50] van de Poll, "Mission, Discipleship Ethical Issues," 305.

[51] Wilkins, *Discipleship Matthew's Gospel*, 221.

pastoral work of forming leaders for obedience, maturity, and participation in God's mission.

If pastoral mentoring is to function as a faithful means of leadership formation, it must be understood not as an exceptional ministry practice but as a normative and intentional expression of the church's calling. Malan Nel argues that many contemporary churches have lost the radical and relational nature of disciple-making, reducing discipleship to sporadic programs instead of embracing it as a way of life ordered toward forming disciples who themselves make disciples.[52] Nel contends that this loss reflects a failure to grasp the intentional, relational, and multiplying character of disciple-making.[53] Pastoral mentoring emerges as a critical practice through which pastors recover disciple-making as a normal pattern of leadership formation in the church. By intentionally investing in emerging leaders and shaping them through relational guidance, accountability, and shared obedience, pastors cultivate leaders who are not only formed by Christ but are also equipped to participate in the ongoing formation of others.[54] Pastoral mentoring helps the church resist shallow and inconsistent approaches to discipleship and fosters a culture of leadership formation marked by intentional relationships, faithful obedience, and generational continuity.

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[52] Malan Nel, "Disciple-making: What Is It All About?" *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81, no. 1 (2025): 1, 4-5.

[53] Nel, "Disciple Making," 4-5.

[54] Nel, "Disciple Making," 4-5.

Summary of Biblical and Reformed Foundations for Pastoral Mentoring

This section has set forth a biblical and Reformed theological framework for pastoral mentoring as a faithful and formative practice in the life of the local church. Scripture presents the formation of leaders as a relational process shaped through presence, imitation, and the careful entrusting of responsibility, not through detached instruction or technique-driven programs. Reformed theological reflection deepens this vision by emphasizing that such formation is fundamentally redemptive and pastoral in character, attending to the ongoing transformation of the heart in the shared life of God's people. These foundations present pastoral mentoring as a central way to shepherd emerging leaders, walking alongside them as God shapes their character, convictions, and capacity for service. The next section turns to transformational leadership and considers how leadership theory may inform pastoral mentoring in the development of leaders.

Transformational Leadership Theory

The Moral Vision of Leadership

James MacGregor Burns provides the moral starting point for transformational leadership theory. Rejecting reductions of leadership to coercion or control, Burns argues that leadership is fundamentally a relationship rather than a possession of power. "We must see power—and leadership—as not things but as relationships."[55] Leadership is not the manipulation of resources but the mobilization of persons toward shared purposes. Burns describes leadership as the reciprocal process in which people with certain motives

[55] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Political Classics, 2010), 11.

and values pursue goals held independently or mutually by leaders and followers.[56] In its transformational form, leadership becomes distinctly moral: it "raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led."[57] It is not merely a transaction, but a form of leadership that seeks moral growth, shared purpose, and higher levels of motivation and morality in both leaders and followers.

Other studies show how transformational leadership manifests in pastoral ministry. Judith Corbett Carter found that transformational leadership was positively associated with pastoral effectiveness and that individualized consideration was the strongest predictor of that effectiveness.[58] Where Burns provides the moral vision of leadership, Carter shows that transformational leadership is expressed in concrete pastoral practices. In pastoral settings, it appears most clearly when leaders give careful, personal attention to the people they serve and to their development in ministry.

Burns distinguishes sharply between transactional and transforming forms of leadership. Transactional leadership operates through exchange: leaders and followers' bargain, negotiate, and trade resources or compliance to meet established goals. By contrast, transformational leadership moves beyond exchange and seeks to elevate the motives and values of both leader and follower. Burns explains that transactional leadership involves exchange between leaders and followers for the sake of independent objectives, whereas transforming leadership seeks to elevate motives, values, and shared

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[56] Burns, *Leadership*, 425.

[57] Burns, *Leadership*, 20.

[58] Judith Corbett Carter, "Transformational Leadership and Pastoral Leader Effectiveness," *Pastoral Psychology* 58, no. 3 (2009): 269.

purpose.[59] This distinction shows that transactional leadership may secure agreement or productivity, but transformational leadership seeks change that reaches beyond negotiated exchange. In Burns's framework, leadership at its highest is not simply effective management, but the shared pursuit of higher purposes shaped by common values.

This vision of leadership is not merely inspirational but deeply formative. At its core, "the leader's task is consciousness-raising."[60] Leaders help followers become more aware of their own values, needs, and aspirations, drawing these into clearer focus and aligning them toward higher purposes. Leadership is more than accidental influence; it is "collectively purposeful causal action" directed toward intended change.[61] Burns presents leadership as more than the exercise of authority alone. It is a moral and relational work that clarifies values, gives direction, and draws people toward shared purpose. In this sense, transforming leadership becomes an "elevating force."[62]

From Vision to Practice

A compelling vision of leadership must finally be expressed in practice. Bernard Bass developed Burns's framework by translating that moral and relational vision into more concrete and practical patterns of leadership. While Burns described the elevation of motives and moral aspiration, Bass showed how that kind of change could take shape in organizations and institutions. Transformational leaders, he writes, "stimulate and

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[59] Burns, *Leadership*, 425-426.

[60] Burns, *Leadership*, 44.

[61] Burns, *Leadership*, 434.

[62] Burns, *Leadership*, 166.

inspire followers both to achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity."[63] Leadership, in this expanded account, is not only about moral aspiration but about relational influence that moves followers beyond narrow self-interest toward shared purpose.[64] In doing so, Bass provides a framework through which transformational leadership can be studied, assessed, and intentionally developed.

Transformational leadership takes practical shape through four interrelated patterns of influence. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio identify four components that define it: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.[65] Idealized influence describes the leader's credible example, and inspirational motivation names the leader's ability to cast a compelling vision that gives followers purpose and hope. Intellectual stimulation invites followers to question assumptions and think creatively. Individualized consideration, the most explicit developmental dimension, involves attending to each follower's growth by serving as coach or mentor. These practices give concrete expression to Burns's moral vision by showing how transformational leadership is lived out in relationships.[66]

Bass did not set transactional leadership aside; he placed it within the broader Full-Range Leadership Model. For Bass, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership all belong within this model rather than standing

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[63] Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership,* 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2006), 3.

[64] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 4.

[65] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5-7.

[66] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 6-7.

as isolated categories.[67] Rather than portraying these approaches as mutually exclusive, Bass and Riggio present leadership behavior as a set of distinct yet related dimensions that may be considered together while still being assessed on their own terms.[68] Research further demonstrated the augmentation effect; that is, transformational leadership predicts leader effectiveness above and beyond what transactional leadership alone can explain.[69] The framework allows for structured accountability while still affirming that leadership finds its fullest expression in inspiration, development, and shared moral purpose.

Transformational leadership is not merely a theory of influence but also a framework for developing people. Bass and Riggio emphasize that a core element of transformational leadership is "the development of followers to enhance their capabilities and their capacity to lead."[70] Leaders do not simply direct performance; they cultivate the growth of those they lead. Individualized consideration, in particular, reflects this developmental posture, as leaders attend to each follower's growth by serving as coach or mentor.[71] In this sense, transformational leadership is deeply relational and closely aligned with mentoring, as leaders serve as role models who foster learning, confidence, personal identity, and well-being.[72] Leadership is not confined to organizational

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[67] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 19.

[68] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 25.

[69] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 50.

[70] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 55.

[71] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 7.

[72] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 55.

outcomes but extends to the formation of future leaders. It reaches beyond immediate productivity to the formation of character, capacity, and future leadership.

As the theory matured, researchers increasingly asked whether transformational leadership produced the outcomes it claimed. Bass and his colleagues argued that transformational leadership "makes the difference," pointing to evidence that it relates positively to performance across corporate, military, educational, governmental, and nonprofit contexts.[73] Moreover, transformational leadership has been shown to lead to performance "beyond expectations" when compared with transactional leadership.[74] This research matters not only because it points to stronger performance, but also because it links transformational leadership to greater self-efficacy, stronger value alignment, and deeper trust between leaders and followers.[75] The theory was tested not only as an ideal of leadership, but as a measurable pattern of influence. The following discussion turns to the empirical research that shaped and evaluated the model.

Expansion and Development of the Model

As transformational leadership theory developed, its application widened beyond individual leader-follower relationships to broader questions of organizational effectiveness and leadership development. In the edited volume *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership*, Bass and Bruce J. Avolio argue that the full-range model of leadership, including both transactional and

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[73] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 47-48.

[74] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 56.

[75] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 52-53.

transformational leadership, could be applied to "specific areas of leadership, management, and organizational development."[76] Within this framework, transformational leadership is described not as a replacement for transactional leadership but as an expansion of it, moving leadership beyond negotiated compliance toward deeper influence on people and organizations.[77] Transformational leaders are characterized as those who "motivate others to do more than they originally intended and often even more than they thought possible," setting higher expectations and typically achieving higher performance.[78] This broader application extends the theory from a primarily relational construct to an organizational framework concerned with mission, team development, and long-term effectiveness.

Karl W. Kuhnert shows that transformational leadership is concerned with developing people. He distinguishes transformational leadership from transactional exchange by writing that it is "based on more than the compliance of followers or the establishment of agreements: It involves shifts in followers' beliefs, values, needs, and capabilities."[79] Transformational leadership seeks deeper change in the lives of followers, not simply improved cooperation. Kuhnert further argues that these leadership models reflect diverse ways of understanding leader behavior and its effect on followers and

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[76] Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, "Introduction," in *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership,* ed. Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 1.

[77] Bass and Avolio, "Introduction," 3.

[78] Bass and Avolio, "Introduction," 3.

[79] Karl W. Kuhnert, "Transforming Leadership: Developing People Through Delegation," in *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership,* ed. Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 12.

colleagues.[80] Leadership here is not merely about assigning tasks but about shaping how people understand their work and themselves within it. This developmental emphasis pushes the theory toward growth, maturity, and the formation of future leaders.

Transformational leadership does not simply appear; it develops over time. Avolio argues that "leadership development is a time-based process and cannot be accomplished at one point in time."[81] Leadership grows through experience, reflection, and intentional practice rather than through a single event or training moment. Avolio shows that leadership formation is gradual, repeatedly practiced, and reinforced over time.[82] The model presents leadership as something that must be practiced and reinforced over time.

While Bass and Avolio emphasize the developmental potential of transformational leadership, Gary Yukl offers an important caution against overstating the theory. He notes that transformational leadership is closely related to charisma but "by itself it is not sufficient to account for the transformation process."[83] He also argues that transformational leadership is not equally effective in all situations and that its effects may be shaped by situational variables.[84] Transformational leadership is best understood not as a universal solution, but as a powerful pattern of influence whose effectiveness depends in part on the leader's capacity to adapt wisely to context.

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[80] Kuhnert, "Transforming Leadership," 12.

[81] Bruce J. Avolio, *Full Range Leadership Development,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011), 141.

[82] Avolio, *Full Range Leadership Development*, 141.

[83] Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations,* 8th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 323.

[84] Yukl, *Leadership Organizations*, 324.

Later contributions sharpen the theory by extending Bass's practical framework into questions of organizational effectiveness, leader development, growth over time, contextual awareness, and the limits of universal application. Transformational leadership appears here not as a fixed set of traits but as a pattern of influence that develops over time and must be exercised with discernment in particular settings. This development in literature led scholars to evaluate transformational leadership empirically and to examine its effectiveness across settings.

Evaluating the Theory: Empirical Research

Large-Scale Studies

A vision of leadership that claims to elevate motives and develop people must be evaluated, not merely admired. One of the most extensive evaluations of transformational leadership came in the meta-analysis by Timothy Judge and Ronald Piccolo, who consolidated findings from eighty-seven sources across a wide range of settings. Their analysis revealed that transformational leadership has a meaningful relationship with leader effectiveness.[85] In other words, across industries, organizations, and research designs, leaders who exhibit transformational behaviors are rated as more effective. The study also revealed complexity. Transformational leadership overlaps substantially with contingent reward, and in several outcomes contingent reward proved as strong as, or stronger than, transformational leadership.[86] Yet even when accounting for those

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[85] Timothy A. Judge and Ronald F. Piccolo, "Transformational and Transactional Leadership: A Meta-Analytic Test of Their Relative Validity," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 5 (2004): 755.

[86] Judge and Piccolo, "Transformational Transactional Leadership," 755.

similarities, transformational leadership continued to predict effectiveness beyond transactional approaches alone.[87] Judge and Piccolo caution against treating transformational leadership as a universal solution and encourage its careful use alongside other necessary leadership behaviors. This large-scale review did not settle every debate, but it provided substantial evidence that transformational leadership is more than a compelling idea. It is a pattern of leadership behavior that matters in practice. This broad support in the literature led researchers to assess transformational leadership more directly in experimental settings.

Experimental Studies

Large-scale research has shown that transformational leadership is consistently associated with effectiveness, but association alone does not prove causation. In a longitudinal, randomized field experiment, Taly Dvir and colleagues evaluated whether training leaders in transformational leadership affected follower development and performance.[88] Unlike most prior studies, which relied on correlational designs, this study randomly assigned leaders to receive transformational leadership training and then assessed outcomes over time. The results indicated that leaders in the experimental group had a more positive impact on direct followers' development and on indirect followers' performance than did leaders in the control group. Transformational leadership did not merely appear alongside effectiveness but rather exerted a causal influence on follower

[87] Judge and Piccolo, "Transformational Transactional Leadership," 763.

[88] Taly Dvir et al., "Impact of Transformational Leadership on Follower Development and Performance: A Field Experiment," *Academy of Management Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 735.

development and performance.[89] Such findings provided empirical support for one of the theory's central claims: that leadership can elevate followers not only in productivity but in personal growth and capacity.

Rowold's research suggests that transformational leadership is relevant in pastoral ministry as well. In two studies of evangelical Protestant congregations in western Germany, transformational leadership was positively associated with followers' extra effort, perceived effectiveness, satisfaction with their pastor, and job satisfaction, as well as with worshippers' satisfaction with the worship service.[90] These findings do not test follower development as directly as Dvir's experiment, but they do show that transformational leadership in pastoral settings is linked to meaningful ministry outcomes.

Beyond performance outcomes, Dvir and his colleagues gave sustained attention to follower development. "A principal aspect of transformational leadership is its emphasis on follower development," they note, framing their experiment around this core claim.[91] They organized follower development around three domains: motivation, morality, and empowerment.[92] Their framework linked motivation to self-actualization and extra effort, morality to internalization of moral values and collectivistic orientation, and empowerment to critical-independent approach, active engagement, and self-

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[89] Dvir et al., "Impact Transformational Leadership," 735, 741.

[90] Jens Rowold, "Effects of Transactional and Transformational Leadership of Pastors," *Pastoral Psychology* 56, no. 4 (2008): 403, 407, 409.

[91] Dvir et al., "Impact Transformational Leadership," 736.

[92] Dvir et al., "Impact Transformational Leadership," 736.

efficacy.[93] The results confirmed significant treatment effects for self-efficacy, critical-independent approach, and extra effort, with collectivistic orientation approaching significance.[94] The authors present follower development as a real outcome of transformational leadership, even though not every proposed indicator reached statistical significance. They suggest that follower development may mediate performance outcomes and that preventing "developmental regression" should be regarded as a positive outcome of transformational leadership.[95] These findings direct attention to the personal characteristics that may shape leadership development over time.

Personality and Leadership Formation

Another empirical question concerns the role of personality in transformational leadership. Joyce Bono and Timothy Judge examined the relationship between personality traits and transformational leadership behaviors to assess how closely the two are connected.[96] Their findings revealed that extraversion was "the strongest and most consistent correlate of transformational leadership," though the relationship was modest.[97] Neuroticism, by contrast, demonstrated a negative association with transformational leadership behaviors.[98] Yet the overall relationship between personality

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[93] Dvir et al., "Impact Transformational Leadership," 736-737.

[94] Dvir et al., "Impact Transformational Leadership," 740.

[95] Dvir et al., "Impact Transformational Leadership," 741-742.

[96] Joyce E. Bono and Timothy A. Judge, "Personality and Transformational and Transactional Leadership: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 5 (2004): 901.

[97] Bono and Judge, "Personality Transformational Transactional Leadership," 901.

[98] Bono and Judge, "Personality Transformational Transactional Leadership," 904-905.

and transformational leadership proved relatively limited. "Overall, our results linking personality with ratings of transformational and transactional leadership behaviors were weak," the authors conclude.[99] The Big Five traits explained only a modest portion of the variability in transformational leadership dimensions.[100] These findings leave room for context, learning, and development in how transformational leadership behaviors take shape.

Early Validation

Early empirical studies gave important support to transformational leadership in organizational settings. John J. Hater and Bass proposed that "transformational leaders are postulated to be responsible for performance beyond ordinary expectations as they transmit a sense of mission, stimulate learning experiences, and arouse new ways of thinking."[101] Their findings demonstrated that transformational leadership added to the prediction of subordinates' ratings of leader effectiveness and satisfaction beyond that of transactional leadership.[102] Managers independently identified as top performers were rated higher on transformational leadership than randomly selected managers.[103] The correlations between transformational leadership factors and subordinates' ratings were

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[99] Bono and Judge, "Personality Transformational Transactional Leadership," 906.

[100] Bono and Judge, "Personality Transformational Transactional Leadership," 906-907.

[101] John J. Hater and Bernard M. Bass, "Superiors' Evaluations and Subordinates' Perceptions of Transformational and Transactional Leadership," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 73, no. 4 (1988): 695.

[102] Hater and Bass, "Superiors' Evaluations Subordinates' Perceptions," 698, 700.

[103] Hater and Bass, "Superiors' Evaluations Subordinates' Perceptions," 699-700.

consistently strong, whereas transactional factors demonstrated weaker associations.[104] These early results supported the distinct contribution of transformational leadership and extended the validity of the model by using criteria measured independently of subordinates' perceptions.[105]

Early validation studies showed that transformational leadership was often associated with stronger perceptions of effectiveness and greater follower effort. Broader research reviews found similar patterns across varied settings, even as they cautioned that transformational leadership overlaps in important ways with certain transactional behaviors. Experimental work strengthened the case by demonstrating that when transformational leadership behaviors are intentionally cultivated, they can influence both follower development and performance over time. Personality research added an important qualification: while traits such as extraversion were associated with transformational leadership, they explained only a modest portion of its variance. Transformational leadership was shaped by personality without being determined by it. The empirical literature presented transformational leadership as a meaningful approach to leadership with real empirical support, even if it still requires careful and responsible use.

Summary of Transformational Leadership Theory

This literature presents transformational leadership as a morally grounded, developmental, and empirically supported approach to leadership. Burns laid the moral

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[104] Hater and Bass, "Superiors' Evaluations Subordinates' Perceptions," 698.

[105] Hater and Bass, "Superiors' Evaluations Subordinates' Perceptions," 700.

and relational foundation for transforming leadership, and Bass gave that vision more practical expression in observable behaviors and organizational life. Empirical studies suggest that transformational leadership is associated with effectiveness, follower development, and growth over time, even as they also caution against treating it as a universal solution or as a pattern fully explained by personality. Pastoral studies further suggest that the model has real relevance for ministry settings. For this reason, transformational leadership offers a useful lens for pastoral mentoring and the formation of emerging leaders in the local church.

Mentoring Theory

Defining Mentoring: Conceptual and Historical Foundations

Classical Definitions and Early Organizational Research

Literature consistently describes mentoring as a developmental relationship in which a more experienced person comes alongside a less experienced protégé for the sake of growth in work and vocation. Lillian T. Eby et al. describe mentoring as "a developmentally oriented relationship between a younger or less experienced individual (the protégé) and an older or more experienced individual (the mentor)," emphasizing its relational and growth-centered character.[106] Ragins and Kram similarly note that mentoring has traditionally been understood as a relationship in which an experienced

[106] Lillian T. Eby et al., "An Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis of the Potential Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences of Protégé Perceptions of Mentoring," *Psychological Bulletin* 139, no. 2 (2013): 441.

mentor assists in "helping and developing the protégé's career,"[107] and they further clarify that it is distinguished by its embeddedness within a developmental career context.[108] Kram deepens this understanding by arguing that the mentor relationship serves as "the prototype of a relationship that enhances career development,"[109] while also insisting that mentoring functions are "those aspects of a developmental relationship that enhance both individuals' growth and advancement."[110] These definitions present mentoring not as simple supervision or management but as an intentional relationship through which growth, guidance, and advancement take place over time.

Developmental Mentoring Beyond Hierarchy

Although early definitions often tied mentoring to hierarchical advancement, later scholarship presents it more broadly as a developmental relationship that reaches beyond positional authority. Ragins and Kram argue that a "core feature" distinguishing mentoring from other personal relationships is that it is "a developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context," shifting attention from hierarchy to growth. [111] Kram defines mentoring functions as enhancing "both individuals' growth and advancement," identifying career and psychosocial functions as the two broad categories

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[107] Belle Rose Ragins and Kathy E. Kram, "The Roots and Meaning of Mentoring," in *Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research, and Practice,* ed. Belle Rose Ragins and Kathy E. Kram (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 5.

[108] Ragins and Kram, "Roots Meaning Mentoring," 5.

[109] Kathy E. Kram, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 2.

[110] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 22.

[111] Ragins and Kram, "Roots Meaning Mentoring," 8.

through which development occurs.[112] These psychosocial functions, including role modeling, affirmation, counseling, and friendship, enhance a protégé's "sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness," indicating that mentoring addresses identity formation as well as advancement.[113] Eby and colleagues describe mentoring as "a unique, idiosyncratic relationship marked by an emotional bond between mentor and protégé," underscoring that mentoring cannot be reduced to instrumental exchange.[114] These perspectives present mentoring not simply as a path to advancement but as a relational process through which competence, identity, and maturity take shape.

Mentoring as Relational Formation Rather Than Supervision

At its heart, mentoring is defined not simply by advancement but by the quality of the relationship itself. Ragins and Kram observe that mentoring relationships exist "on a continuum of quality that reflects a full range of positive and negative experiences, processes, and outcomes,"[115] which challenges the assumption that mentoring is uniformly beneficial. They also note earlier research focused on instrumental career outcomes while overlooking relational outcomes that are "central to effective relationships, learning, and growth."[116] Allen et al. reach a similar conclusion, finding that mentoring is "more strongly related to subjective indicators of career success, such as

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[112] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 22.

[113] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 22, 32.

[114] Eby et al, "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 441.

[115] Ragins and Kram, "Roots Meaning Mentoring," 8.

[116] Ragins and Kram, "Roots Meaning Mentoring," 8.

career and job satisfaction, than it is to objective career success indicators,"[117] which suggests that mentoring's deepest effects are often inward rather than outward. Eby and Robertson add an important caution: "mere involvement in a mentoring relationship or the provision of mentoring support is not a guarantee of positive outcomes,"[118] which means mentoring is not made effective simply by assigning a role or structure. Mentoring is more than sponsorship. Its strength lies in the quality of the relationship, where trust, attentiveness, and personal growth carry real weight.

Because mentoring is relational, it also carries real risk. Eby et al. demonstrate that mentors' negative experiences constitute "a multidimensional construct that is conceptually distinct from positive experiences,"[119] which shows that relational breakdown is not simply the loss of benefit but a distinct force in shaping the relationship. They further argue that "there is accumulating evidence that negative relational experiences carry more weight in predicting outcomes than do positive relational experiences,"[120] which suggests that harmful dynamics may shape development more deeply than helpful ones. Eby and Robertson likewise note that mentoring relationships are characterized by "a considerable power differential between mentor and

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[117] Tammy D. Allen et al., "Career Benefits Associated with Protégés: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2004): 132.

[118] Lillian T. Eby and Melissa M. Robertson, "The Psychology of Workplace Mentoring Relationships," *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 7 (2020): 78.

[119] Lillian T. Eby, Jaime R. Durley, Sarah C. Evans, and Belle Rose Ragins, "Mentors' Perceptions of Negative Mentoring Experiences: Scale Development and Nomological Validation," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 93, no. 2 (2008): 369.

[120] Eby et al., "Negative Mentoring Experiences," 359.

protégé,"[121] and that mentoring is "initiated and executed with the expressed purpose of meeting the protégé's needs for career development and growth,"[122] which means mentoring is not a flat relationship between equals. It is an intentional relationship of trust, guidance, and responsibility aimed at the protégé's growth. For that reason, mentoring is not neutral supervision. It is a relational process in which power and trust can either strengthen growth or hinder it.

Summary

Mentoring scholarship consistently describes mentoring as a developmental relationship grounded in vocational settings and defined more by the strength of the relationship than by formal rank. Classical definitions emphasize career advancement and structured support, while subsequent scholarship clarifies that mentoring's most considerable influence often lies in personal formation and lived growth. Mentoring relationships are marked by power differences and the possibility of relational breakdowns, reminding readers that mentoring is not automatically beneficial simply because it exists. This literature presents mentoring as a relational process shaped by influence, trust, and responsibility. This foundation makes it possible to consider more closely the functions and dynamics at work in mentoring relationships.

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[121] Eby and Robertson, "Psychology Workplace Mentoring Relationships," 89.

[122] Eby and Robertson, "Psychology Workplace Mentoring Relationships," 89.

Career and Psychosocial Functions

Mentoring works through identifiable functions that affect both career progress and personal development. Kram distinguishes between career functions and psychosocial functions.[123] She explains that career functions include sponsorship, exposure, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments, while psychosocial functions strengthen identity through affirmation, counseling, and role modeling.[124] Allen et al. affirm this distinction, defining career-related mentoring as support that enhances advancement within the organization and psychosocial mentoring as those aspects of the relationship that enhance "an individual's sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role."[125] Eby and colleagues similarly distinguish between instrumental support, which facilitates goal attainment, and psychosocial support, which enhances emotional and personal development.[126] These perspectives show that mentoring functions are not accidental features of relationship but primary ways growth takes place.

Empirical research further clarifies that psychosocial functions often carry greater developmental weight than purely instrumental outcomes. Allen et al. report that mentoring is "more strongly related to subjective indicators of career success, such as

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[123] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 22.

[124] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 23-33.

[125] Allen et al., "Career Benefits Associated Protégés," 128.

[126] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 443.

career and job satisfaction, than it is to objective career success indicators,"[127] suggesting that the most enduring effects of mentoring are experienced internally rather than measured externally. They also conclude that focusing primarily on objective career advancement "may not be warranted,"[128] because mentoring's influence frequently operates through satisfaction, identity, and personal meaning. Eby and colleagues similarly find that perceived relationship quality and psychosocial support are strongly associated with social capital and a sense of affiliation,[129] reinforcing the vital role of relational depth in mentoring effectiveness. These findings indicate that while career advancement remains significant, mentoring's formative power is most evident in how individuals understand their competence, belonging, and professional identity.

Mentor Competencies and Relational Trust

Effective mentoring depends not only on defined functions but also on the relational competence of the mentor. Eby and Robertson argue that "understanding mentoring from a relational perspective is critical,"[130] emphasizing that mentoring outcomes are shaped by relational dynamics rather than by structure alone. They note that mentorships vary considerably in their relational features and that these differences have marked implications for both mentor and protégé outcomes.[131] Eby and colleagues further

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[127] Allen et al., "Career Benefits Associated Protégés," 132.

[128] Allen et al., "Career Benefits Associated Protégés," 132.

[129] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 441.

[130] Eby and Robertson, "Psychology Workplace Mentoring Relationships," 78-79.

[131] Eby and Robertson, "Psychology Workplace Mentoring Relationships," 78.

report that perceived similarity in deep-level characteristics such as attitudes, values, and personality is one of the strongest predictors of mentoring support and relationship quality.[132] These findings indicate that mentoring effectiveness is closely tied to relational trust, shared understanding, and the mentor's capacity to cultivate a high-quality developmental bond.

Relational trust is strengthened or weakened by the broader context in which mentoring occurs. Eby and Robertson observe that disclosure, trust, and mutual empathy may be more difficult to develop in organizational climates marked by strong deference to authority,[133] suggesting that mentoring effectiveness is influenced by culture as well as individual behavior. They further note that mentoring relationships are often activated in times of uncertainty and perceived threat, when protégés benefit from "safe haven mentoring support behaviors such as protection and counseling."[134] These insights highlight the importance of a mentor's capacity to provide stability and protection while also fostering openness and growth. Mentoring requires more than technical guidance. It requires relational attentiveness and the ability to create conditions in which trust can deepen.

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[132] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 441.

[133] Eby and Robertson, "Psychology Workplace Mentoring Relationships," 89.

[134] Eby and Robertson, "Psychology Workplace Mentoring Relationships," 89.

Developmental Phases of Mentoring

Mentoring relationships develop over time and move through recognizable phases. Kram identifies four stages: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition.[135] She explains that the initiation phases begins when the range of mentoring functions expands and mutual expectations are formed.[136] During cultivation, the relationship reaches its fullest expression as career and psychosocial functions are actively exchanged and tested in practice.[137] Separation follows as structural or psychological changes alter the nature of the relationship and increase the protégé's independence.[138] Redefinition occurs when "after several years of separation, a developmental relationship evolves into a new form."[139] This developmental pattern shows that mentoring is not static but shaped by shifting needs and responsibilities over time.

Recognizing these phases clarifies that mentoring requires different expectations at different points in the relationship. Kram notes that the movement from cultivation to separation often involves emotional tension as roles shift and independence increases.[140] What begins as a relationship marked by admiration and guidance eventually requires renegotiation of authority and identity.[141] This transition is not evidence of failure but

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[135] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 48.

[136] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 51.

[137] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 53.

[138] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 56.

[139] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 60.

[140] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 56-59.

[141] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 60-62.

part of the normal developmental process. The mentor must be prepared to release control, and the protégé must be prepared to assume responsibility. A mentoring relationship is healthy when it makes room for increasing independence.

Negative Mentoring and Relational Cost

Mentoring relationships include both benefits and costs. Eby et al. state that "negative experiences are distinct aspects of a relationship rather than simply the absence of benefits."[142] Negative dynamics are therefore not merely the lack of positive support. They function as real relational costs within the mentoring relationship. In fact, "there is accumulating evidence that negative relational experiences carry more weight in predicting outcomes than do positive relational experiences."[143] Eby et al. further identify "three distinct types of negative experiences with protégés…protégé performance problems, interpersonal problems, and destructive relational patterns."[144] These categories clarify how mentoring relationships weaken when relational costs increase.

Negative mentoring does not remain confined to isolated incidents. As relational costs increase, the stability of the mentoring bond is threatened. Eby et al. note that "as the costs associated with participation in a relationship increase, the relationship becomes less viable and is more likely to dissolve."[145] When strain persists, mentors may also experience depletion. In fact, "a mentor is likely to report higher burnout in situations

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[142] Eby et al., "Negative Mentoring Experiences," 359.

[143] Eby et al., "Negative Mentoring Experiences," 360.

[144] Eby et al., "Negative Mentoring Experiences," 368.

[145] Eby et al., "Negative Mentoring Experiences," 360.

where the protégé is perceived as not reciprocating or behaving in a way that makes it difficult for the mentor to provide guidance and support."[146] Negative mentoring affects not only relational quality but the sustainability of the leader's investment in the relationship.

Summary

The literature makes clear that mentoring is not merely a professional strategy but a relational investment that shapes both skill and character over time. While mentoring can contribute to vocational advancement, its deeper influence often lies in how it strengthens identity, confidence, and a sense of calling. Effective mentoring depends upon trust, wise guidance, and the mentor's ability to cultivate a relationship marked by honesty and care. At the same time, mentoring is not without strain. Relationships move through changing seasons, and when trust weakens or expectations shift, the mentor and protégé can both feel the cost. These realities remind us that mentoring is a weighty stewardship. Because it carries both promise and risk, mentoring must be approached intentionally if it is to serve as a faithful means of forming leaders.

Mentoring and Leadership Development

Leader Development and Leadership Development

Leader development and leadership development are related but distinct concepts. David Day argues that "the proposed distinction between leader development and

[146] Eby et al., "Negative Mentoring Experiences," 360.

leadership development is more than mere semantics."[147] At the core of this distinction is "an orientation toward developing human capital (leader development) as compared with social capital (leadership development)."[148] Leader development focuses on the growth of individual capabilities such as self-awareness and self-regulation, which Day associates with intrapersonal competence.[149] Leadership development, by contrast, emphasizes "the development of reciprocal obligations and commitments built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect," and must be enacted in relationships.[150] Leadership is not merely a personal attribute but "an emergent property of social systems."[151] This distinction clarifies that while individual leaders must mature personally, leadership develops most fully through networks of trust, mutual responsibility, and shared participation.

Mentoring is one of the chief ways trust and shared responsibility are formed. Eby and colleagues find that instrumental support and relationship quality are closely tied to social capital, showing that mentoring strengthens relational connection as well as individual growth[152]. Practical support helps protégés pursue concrete goals, while personal support strengthens protégé's "perception of competence" and personal development.[153] High-quality mentoring relationships are described as "fundamentally

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[147] David V. Day, "Leadership Development: A Review in Context," *The Leadership Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2000): 605.

[148] Day, "Leadership Development," 605.

[149] Day, "Leadership Development," 584-585.

[150] Day, "Leadership Development," 585, 605.

[151] Day, "Leadership Development," 583, 605.

[152] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 441.

[153] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 443.

different from the average relationships and potentially more impactful," suggesting that leadership development is deepened where trust and relational depth are present.[154] Read alongside Day's distinction between human and social capital, these findings show that mentoring strengthens not only the individual leader but also the relational network in which leadership grows.

Transformational Leadership Traits Linked to Mentoring Effectiveness

Transformational leadership theory situates mentoring near the center of effective leadership. Bass and Riggio situate mentoring within individualized consideration, where leaders attend to followers' growth by serving as coaches or mentors.[155] They also connect transformational leadership and mentoring through a shared concern for learning, confidence, identity, and well-being.[156] Avolio likewise describes transformational leadership as the work of helping followers become leaders and remarks that such development unfolds over time, not at a single moment.[157] These perspectives suggest that mentoring is not peripheral to transformational leadership but one of the clearest ways it is lived out in relationships over time.

Leadership develops in relational systems, not in isolation. Day describes leadership as "an emergent property of social systems…rather than something that is

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[154] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 444.

[155] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 7.

[156] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 55.

[157] Avolio, *Full Range Leadership Development*, 51, 141.

added to existing systems."[158] If leadership arises in relationships, its development cannot be reduced to personal improvement alone. It requires stronger relational ties through which influence is exercised. He also writes that "leadership is developed through the enactment of leadership,"[159] indicating that growth occurs through meaningful participation rather than isolated instruction. Mentoring serves this process by creating structured opportunities for shared responsibility, relational engagement, and entrusted work. Mentoring not only prepares individuals for leadership roles but strengthens the conditions in which leadership can emerge and endure over time.

Summary

This section shows that leadership development involves more than individual skill. While personal maturity matters, leadership takes shape in relationships marked by trust and shared responsibility. Drawing on Day's distinction between human and social capital, leadership emerges as people learn to engage, guide, and entrust one another over time. The research also shows that mentoring is one of the chief ways this relational growth occurs. Transformational leadership traits, especially individualized consideration and the intentional development of others, align closely with mentoring practices that form leaders through steady guidance and shared experience. Mentoring stands not at the margins of leadership formation but at its center, shaping both leader and protégé while strengthening the relational life of the community, particularly in the local church.

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[158] Day, "Leadership Development," 605.

[159] Day, "Leadership Development," 605.

Spiritual Formation and Vocational Identity Development

Leadership formation in the local church is inseparable from spiritual formation. Clinton writes that leadership is "a lifetime of lessons," and that it "evolves and emerges over a lifetime,"[160] reminding readers that God forms leaders through seasons of growth, testing, and refinement. Mentoring theory reinforces this point by showing that developmental relationships shape not only skill but identity and confidence over time. Eby and colleagues note that personal support contributes to a protégé's "perception of competence" and personal development,[161] suggesting that mentoring influences how individuals understand themselves and their calling. In the local church, mentoring becomes a relational setting in which character, calling, and spiritual maturity are cultivated together instead of treated as separate tracks of development.

Spiritual formation in the local church depends on the Spirit's shaping of character and calling. Clinton writes that "character is foundational if a leader is to influence people for God's purposes,"[162] reminding readers that influence in the church flows from inner transformation rather than position. Sanders likewise insists that "spiritual leadership can be exercised only by Spirit-filled men,"[163] showing that competence and administrative skill are insufficient without Spirit-governed character.

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[160] Clinton, *Making Leader*, 33, 185.

[161] Eby et al., "Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis," 443.

[162] Clinton, *Making Leader*, 83.

[163] J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 97.

To be "filled with the Spirit," he writes, is to be "controlled by the Spirit,"[164] which means spiritual leadership begins with surrender before it bears fruit in service. In mentoring relationships, seasoned leaders' model that dependence on God and guide emerging leaders through testing, entrusted responsibility, and patient guidance as vocational identity takes shape over time. Mentoring becomes a Spirit-dependent setting in which character, calling, and leadership are formed together in the life of the local church.

Mutual Growth and Reciprocal Transformation

Mentoring in the local church is not a one-directional transfer of wisdom but a relationship marked by mutual growth. Ragins and Kram describe mentoring at its best as "a life-altering relationship that inspires mutual growth, learning, and development," and note that such relationships can transform not only individuals but also groups, organizations, and communities.[165] This transformative potential is rooted in the relational nature of mentoring itself. As the *SAGE Handbook* notes, "successful mentoring relationships are a two-way, dynamic process,"[166] requiring both parties to participate actively in learning and development. In the context of the local church, this means that mentors are not shaping emerging leaders; they themselves are refined, challenged, and renewed through the relationship. Mentoring becomes a shared process

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[164] Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 101.

[165] Ragins and Kram, "Roots Meaning Mentoring," 3.

[166] David A. Clutterbuck et al., eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Mentoring* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017), 7.

of transformation in which growth is reciprocal, and the community is strengthened as both mentor and protégé mature together.

Authority, Influence, and Pastoral Stewardship in Mentoring

Mentoring in the local church carries authority and requires careful stewardship. Newton locates that responsibility in the church itself, arguing that pastors and elders should take the lead in mentoring those whom the church will send out to serve Christ's kingdom.[167] That work is rooted in congregational life. He writes that "the praxis within the congregation shapes the pastoral trainee as much as the wise words of his mentor," showing that formation takes place through shared worship, doctrine, mission, and relationships.[168] Because mentors "speak into their trainees' lives,"[169] their guidance extends beyond skill development to character, conviction, and calling. That influence must be exercised with humility and accountability under Christ's lordship and for the good of the body. Mentoring is a pastoral stewardship entrusted to the church to form the next generation of leaders.

Pastoral stewardship in mentoring requires more than positional authority. It calls for theological humility and ethical care. As Currie observes, mentoring in theology and pastoral ministry "is impossible to describe apart from the life, death, and resurrection of

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[167] Phil A. Newton, *The Mentoring Church: How Pastors and Congregations Cultivate Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017), 128.

[168] Newton, *Mentoring Church*, 179.

[169] Newton, *Mentoring Church*, 181.

Jesus Christ,"[170] reminding us that mentoring authority is shaped by the cross and submitted to Christ. Mentors are not spiritual technicians but, in the economy of the gospel, "saints who have learned to follow."[171] That posture guards both the mentor and the protégé. Bartlett notes of Paul's example that he "does not intend to command or to coerce,"[172] which offers a fitting picture of noncoercive mentoring. Ethical reflection is not optional. Miles warns that "mentoring without ethics is unethical,"[173] and adds that moral action and character are required of mentors if they are to honor autonomy, protect confidentiality, and keep appropriate boundaries.[174] Authority in mentoring must be exercised as accountable love under Christ, with humility and ethical care necessary for the faithful formation of leaders in the church.

Summary

The literature presents mentoring in the local church as a relational practice marked by trust, influence, and responsibility. Scholars also show that mentoring relationships involve vulnerability and unequal influence, which makes humility, ethical care, and accountable use of authority essential. In the local church, mentoring serves as

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[170] Thomas W. Currie, "Theological-Pastoral Perspectives on Mentoring," in *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Dean K. Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 39.

[171] Currie, "Theological-Pastoral Perspectives," 41.

[172] David L. Bartlett, "Mentoring in the New Testament," in *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Dean K. Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 28.

[173] Rebekah Miles, "Ethical Perspectives on Mentoring," in *Mentoring: Biblical, Theological, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Dean K. Thompson and D. Cameron Murchison (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 69.

[174] Miles, "Ethical Perspectives Mentoring," 83-84.

an important practice for forming emerging leaders in character, calling, and readiness for ministry.

Summary of Mentoring Theory

The mentoring literature presents mentoring as a developmental relationship through which leaders are formed over time. Foundational models describe mentoring in terms of career and relational support, while contemporary research highlights the importance of relational quality, power dynamics, and contextual influence in shaping developmental outcomes. Across these perspectives, development is not treated as the accumulation of skills alone but as growth shaped through sustained relational engagement marked by trust, accountability, and guided participation.

When read alongside transformational leadership theory, mentoring emerges as a concrete relational mechanism through which leadership formation takes place. Both fields emphasize influence exercised over time, the shaping of values and identity, and the entrusted transfer of responsibility within defined boundaries. Within the local church, these insights clarify that pastoral mentoring is neither incidental nor informal. It is an intentional process through which leaders are formed by proximity, modeled faithfulness, shared responsibility, and structured oversight. These insights lead to a broader consideration of leadership development within the local church.

Leadership Development in the Local Church

Leadership development in the local church is formed through the ordinary practices, relationships, and shared ministry of the congregation. The New Testament pattern of discipleship places leadership formation in a covenant community where

spiritual maturity, character, and ministry competence grow together rather than apart. Keller's language of the "general office" of every believer places such formation in the life of the whole body, not in a professional elite.[175] In this view, leaders are not formed apart from the church and then added to its life, but rather they are developed in the church's shared worship, service and ministry alongside the people of God. Tripp describes God's redemptive work as taking place through relationships, which means leadership development ordinarily takes shape in the shared life of the church.[176] Both authors place leadership development in the ordinary life of the congregation, where leaders are formed among God's people through shared worship, care, and ministry.

That same relational pattern appears in the way leaders are formed. Coleman locates leadership formation in Jesus's close presence with a few disciples and in his concentrated investment in them over time.[177] Marshall and Payne present ministry training as rooted in modeling, imitation, and lived example.[178] Both accounts present leadership formation as something learned in shared life, where leaders are shaped through presence, observation, and guided participation before they are entrusted with broader responsibility. Research on clergy development reaches a similar conclusion. McKenna, Yost, and Boyd find that pastoral leaders are shaped chiefly through ministry experience, seasons of transition, and formative relationships rather than through formal

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[175] Keller, *Center Church*, 346.

[176] Tripp, *Instruments Redeemer's Hands*, 122.

[177] Coleman, *Master Plan Evangelism*, 33.

[178] Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine,* 3rd ed. (Sydney: Matthias Media, 2024), 74.

instruction alone.[179] Neal, Francis, and McKenna reinforce that point in their study of mentoring in first incumbency in the Church of England. They found that most participating dioceses had used retired clergy as mentors and that most viewed the practice positively in principle, highlighting mentoring as practical support during early seasons of ministry responsibility and transition.[180] Park extends that picture by showing how leadership development is strengthened through small-group activity, discussion, and shared practice, while also contributing to gradual changes in church culture.[181] These sources present leadership formation in the church as relational, participatory, and gradual, taking shape through shared ministry over time.

Clinton presents leadership development as a lifelong process of learning.[182] In his account, leaders are formed through a long pattern of testing, integrity checks, and ministry assignments that expose character and redirect responsibility.[183] For Clinton, the central issue is not mere activity, but the character of a person the ministry is producing. Sparkman reinforces that emphasis by treating experience as one of the most effective approaches to leadership development and by identifying mentoring relationships as an

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[179] Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost, and Tanya N. Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons That Shape Pastoral Leaders," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 3 (2007): 179.

[180] Tony Neal, Leslie J. Francis, and Ursula McKenna, "A Survey on Mentoring, First Incumbency, and the Role of Retired Clergy: Listening to Bishops," *Rural Theology* 15, no. 1 (2017): 46.

[181] Hee-Kyu Heidi Park, "Pedagogical Strategies for the Transformation of Church Cultures: An Examination of a Spiritual Leadership Development Program in Korean Immigrant Church," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 27, no. 3 (2018): 168-169.

[182] J. Robert Clinton, *Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 33.

[183] Clinton, *Making Leader*, 38, 52.

important part of that process.[184] Bell presses the point further by arguing that leadership development is not simply the training of a person to perform a task, but the cultivation of capacity for learning and growth within the work itself and within a relational community.[185] This focus on formation frames leadership growth as a gradual process shaped through responsibility, relationships, and lived ministry.

McKenna, Yost, and Boyd found that pastoral leaders are formed chiefly in the trenches of ministry, in seasons of transition, and in formative relationships. Their study suggests that education and training remain important, but that the more decisive shaping work of a leader often occurs amid the pressures, transitions, and relationships of ministry itself.[186] Sanou extends that point by arguing that leadership development must be treated as an ongoing responsibility, not as a concern deferred until transition becomes urgent. In his account, intentional mentoring is one of the ways organizations develop leadership capacity at every level and prepare for long-term sustainability.[187] Such growth is personal, but it does not happen in a vacuum. It is shaped by the wider life of the church and by practices that intentionally support the formation of future leaders.

Leadership development in the local church depends on organizational clarity. Malphurs and Mancini both argue that churches develop leaders more faithful leaders

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[184] Torrence E. Sparkman, "The Leadership Development Experiences of Church Denomination Executives," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 11, no. 1 (2017): 54, 59.

[185] Skip Bell, "Learning, Changing, and Doing: A Model for Transformational Leadership Development in Religious and Non-Profit Organizations," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 9, no. 1 (2010): 95.

[186] Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost, and Tanya N. Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons That Shape Pastoral Leaders," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 3 (2007): 179, 187.

[187] Boubakar Sanou, "Leadership Development and Succession: A Review of Best Practices with Insights for Mission Leadership," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 15, no. 1 (2021): 28-29.

when mission, vision, and values are always kept in view.[188] For Malphurs, mission gives direction, while vision and values shape the decisions and ministry priorities that carry that mission forward.[189] This kind of clarity does more than improve planning. It helps keep leadership formation tied to the church's actual calling instead of allowing it to drift with immediate pressures or disconnected programs. For Mancini, clarity is essential to effective leadership, since without it ministries drift out of alignment, fragment, and experience confusion about the church's mission.[190] Marshall and Payne sharpen the point by warning that church structures can consume attention when they are no longer ordered to disciple-making.[191] Leadership development is strengthened when the church's structures, priorities, and practices are focused on a shared mission.

Leadership development in the church becomes visible through faithfulness over time. Banks, Ledbetter, and Greenhalgh describe leader development as growth in moral awareness and spiritual maturity, rooting faithful leadership in the inner life before it appears in public action.[192] This suggests that moral awareness and spiritual maturity become visible gradually, as the inner life is tested and expressed in public ministry over time. Plueddemann makes a similar point by arguing that leaders grow when disorienting experiences unsettle old assumptions, widen perspectives, and reshape a leader's

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[188] Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 173; Will Mancini, *Church Unique* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 51.

[189] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 152-153, 173.

[190] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 51, 199.

[191] Marshall and Payne, *Trellis Vine*, 8-9.

[192] Bernice M. Ledbetter, Robert J. Banks, and David C. Greenhalgh, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 113, 117, 122.

understanding over time.[193] These writers suggest that leadership formation unfolds as faithfulness is evaluated, deepened, and made visible in ministry.

Leadership formation in the church also does not happen by accident. For Marshall and Payne, recruiting and training co-workers is essential to growth in convictions, character, and ministry multiplication.[194] Ministry growth requires intentional investment in people, not merely the maintenance of structures or programs. Mancini shows why such work cannot be left to chance: where clarity and alignment are missing, ministries drift and lose focus.[195] Sanou carries the same concern into succession, treating leadership development as work that belongs in the ordinary life of the organization long before transition becomes urgent.[196] Bell strengthens that emphasis by arguing that leadership development must be integrated into the ongoing life of the organization and sustained through intentional practices of learning, change, and shared work.[197] Leader formation is presented here not as a spontaneous outcome, but as a responsibility the church must order, support, and sustain in its ordinary life.

Summary of Leadership Development in the Local Church

This section has shown that leadership development in the local church is relational, participatory, and rooted in the ordinary life of the congregation. The literature

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[193] James E. Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 205-207.

[194] Marshall and Payne, *Trellis Vine*, 123.

[195] Mancini, *Church Unique*, 199.

[196] Sanou, "Leadership Development Succession," 35, 48.

[197] Bell, "Learning, Changing, Doing," 107-108.

in this section presents leader formation as taking shape through shared ministry, entrusted responsibility, and formative relationships, not primarily through isolated training. The literature also shows that moral awareness, spiritual maturity, and widened perspective become visible gradually as leaders are assessed, shaped by experience, and sustained in faithful service.

Leadership development in the church also requires organizational clarity and intentional investment in emerging leaders. Mission, vision, values, and aligned structures help keep leader formation tied to the church's calling. This literature presents leadership development as a responsibility the church must order, support, and sustain in its ordinary life.

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter reviewed literature in four areas relevant to this study: biblical and Reformed theological foundations for pastoral mentoring, transformational leadership theory, mentoring theory, and leadership development in the local church. Across these areas, the literature presents leadership formation as relational, spiritually grounded, and shaped over time through discipleship, mentoring, and shared ministry. The biblical and Reformed theological foundations for pastoral mentoring show that leadership formation unfolds in the covenant community through faithful example, pastoral oversight, and intentional relationships. Transformational leadership theory contributes a framework for understanding how leaders influence and develop others through moral example, vision, individualized care, and reflective growth. Mentoring theory clarifies that such

development ordinarily occurs through sustained relationships, guided experience, trust, and progressive responsibility.

The discussion of leadership development in the local church reinforces these themes by locating leader formation in the ordinary life of the congregation. Leadership development is presented not primarily as a product of isolated training or formal structure, but as a process that requires shared ministry, organizational clarity, faithfulness over time, and intentional investment in emerging leaders. Mentoring is presented in this chapter as one of the primary pastoral practices by which emerging leaders are developed in the local church. This literature provides the theological and conceptual framework for examining how pastors use transformational leadership mentoring to foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth in the local church.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors used transformational leadership mentoring to foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth within the context of the local church. The assumption of this study was that experienced pastors had learned important principles and practices through their mentoring relationships with emerging leaders and that these experiences could provide valuable insight for leadership development within pastoral ministry. Because these pastors had developed mentoring practices through ministry experience, relational investment, and theological reflection, their perspectives offered valuable insight into leadership development within the local church. A qualitative study was used to understand how pastors described their mentoring practices and the outcomes they observed in emerging leaders.

The study examined three primary areas of focus: how pastors described their experiences mentoring emerging leaders, the specific practices they employed in mentoring relationships, and the outcomes they perceived in those leaders because of mentoring. This qualitative study sought to provide a detailed account of pastoral mentoring practices and the role these relationships played in developing future leaders for ministry in the local church.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do pastors describe their experiences of using mentoring relationships to develop emerging leaders in the local church?

2. In what ways do pastors practice mentoring that supports emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth?
3. What outcomes do pastors perceive in emerging leaders because of these mentoring relationships?

Design of the Study

Sharan B. Merriam describes qualitative research as an approach that seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences, construct meaning from those experiences, and describe the processes that shape those experiences.[198] Qualitative research was particularly well suited for this study because it explored complex human experiences and sought to understand the perspectives of participants within real-life contexts.

Merriam identifies several defining characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative inquiry focuses on understanding meaning from the perspective of participants rather than imposing interpretations from the researcher. Within this approach, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data, engaging directly with participants and their experiences. Qualitative research also follows an inductive process in which patterns and themes are identified from the data as the study unfolds rather than being predetermined in advance. The findings of qualitative

[198] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Franscisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 15.

research are presented through rich and detailed descriptions that capture the complexity of the phenomenon being studied.[199]

This study employed a qualitative research design and conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection. This qualitative method provided comprehensive and descriptive data from participant perspectives regarding pastoral mentoring relationships. Because mentoring relationships involved relational dynamics, personal reflection, and ministry experience, a qualitative approach allowed participants to describe their mentoring practices and insights in their own words.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method because they allowed participants to share their experiences and perspectives in a flexible, open-ended conversational format. This format enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions and gain deeper insight into pastoral mentoring practices and leadership development. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research when the goal is to explore personal experiences and understand how participants interpret those experiences.[200]

By focusing on the experiences of pastors who actively mentor emerging leaders, this qualitative study sought to gain a deeper understanding of how mentoring relationships functioned within the everyday ministry context of the local church. The following section explains how participants were identified and selected for the study.

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[199] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 16-17.

[200] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 110-111.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants who were able to communicate in depth about their experiences mentoring emerging leaders within the context of pastoral ministry. Participants were selected based on their experience in pastoral ministry and their active involvement in mentoring emerging leaders. Each participant was a senior pastor with significant pastoral ministry experience who actively engaged in developing emerging leaders within the life of the church. All participants served as pastors within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and were part of the same regional presbytery. In addition, each pastor served in a mid-sized congregation, providing a comparable ministry context for examining mentoring practices.

To gain insight into best practices in pastoral mentoring, senior pastors were invited to participate in the study based on their ministry experience and their active involvement in mentoring emergent leaders in the church. These pastors' experiences provided valuable insights into the practices, challenges, and opportunities involved in transformational leadership and mentoring in the life of the local church.

Participants were chosen through purposeful sampling, a common method used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant experience related to the phenomenon being studied.[201] This sampling approach allowed the researcher to select senior pastors who could provide meaningful reflection on mentoring relationships and leadership development in pastoral ministry. Participants shared similar levels of pastoral leadership responsibility and served in mid-sized congregations within the Evangelical

[201] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 96-97.

Presbyterian Church. They represented different ministry settings, including suburban, urban, and rural contexts, which provided a range of perspectives on pastoral mentoring practices.

The final study was conducted through personal interviews with six pastors serving within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Participants were invited through personal contact with the researcher and gave written informed consent to participate in the research. Each participant signed a Research Participant Consent Form designed to protect the rights of those involved in the study.

The Human Rights Risk Level Assessment for this study was classified as "no risk" according to the Covenant Theological Seminary Institutional Review Board guidelines. The following consent form was used in this study.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I agree to participate in the research conducted by Eric Phillips to investigate pastoral mentoring practices for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of my participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, and/or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The purpose of the research is to explore how pastors use mentoring practices to foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth within the local church.

2) Potential benefits of the research may include contributing to stronger pastoral mentoring practices in local churches. Though there are no direct benefits for participants, I hope participants may be encouraged by the opportunity to reflect on and share their mentoring experiences.

3) The research process will include participation in one semi-structured interview lasting approximately 60–90 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

4) Participants in this research will be asked to describe their mentoring practices, experiences, perceived outcomes, and related challenges in pastoral ministry.

5) Potential discomforts or stresses: Minimal. Questions relate only to professional ministry experiences and mentoring practices.

6) Potential risks: None. The Human Rights Risk Level Assessment is "no risk" according to Covenant Theological Seminary IRB guidelines.

7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. Pseudonyms will be used in the dissertation. The data gathered for this research will remain confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audio recordings will be securely stored and erased following completion of the dissertation.

8) Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.

9) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Researcher Date

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Participant Date

Please sign both copies. Keep one. Return the other to the researcher. Thank you.

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary. 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.

Having completed the IRB requirements for human rights in research and the risk assessment in the Covenant Theological Seminary Dissertation Notebook, the Human Rights Risk Level Assessment was classified as "no risk" according to Covenant Theological Seminary IRB guidelines.

Each participant completed a one-page, nine-question demographic questionnaire prior to the interview. The questionnaire included the following items:

1. Current ministry role/title?

2. Years in pastoral ministry?
3. Years in current ministry context?
4. Denominational affiliation (if applicable)?
5. Church setting (urban, suburban, rural)?
6. Approximate average weekly attendance of congregation?
7. Number of staff (paid and/or volunteer)?
8. Have you personally been mentored in ministry? (Yes/No)
9. How many emerging leaders are you currently mentoring?

The questionnaire gathered contextual information related to the participant selection criteria. Variables included ministry role, years in pastoral ministry, years in the current ministry context, denominational affiliation, church setting, congregational size, and mentoring involvement. This demographic data provided helpful context for interpreting participant responses during the analysis presented in Chapter 4.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed the researcher to build upon participant responses, explore complex issues more thoroughly, and ask clarifying questions.[202] This approach gave participants the opportunity to describe their mentoring practices and ministry experiences in their own words.

The interview protocol was designed to explore several key areas related to pastoral mentoring. Participants were asked to describe their experiences mentoring

[202] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 110-111.

emerging leaders, the practices they used in mentoring relationships, and the outcomes they observed among those they mentor. Additional questions invited participants to reflect on challenges and insights they encountered in mentoring within pastoral ministry.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher reviewed the interview protocol to ensure that the questions were clear and capable of eliciting meaningful responses. During the initial stages of data collection, the researcher also reflected on the first several interviews to evaluate how effectively the questions prompted participants to describe their mentoring practices. This reflective process helped the researcher identify opportunities to ask more focused follow-up questions and to look more closely at areas related to transformational pastoral mentoring, an approach consistent with Merriam's description of qualitative analysis occurring simultaneously with data collection.[203]

The researcher conducted six interviews with senior pastors serving in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which served as the primary source of data for the study. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted in person at locations convenient for the participants.

With participant permission, the researcher audio recorded each interview using the recording function available in the iPhone Notes application. Recording the interviews allowed the researcher to preserve the accuracy of participant responses and to review them carefully during the analysis process. The recordings were subsequently reviewed and transcribed to support analysis of the interview data.

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[203] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 196-197.

In addition to the recorded interviews, the researcher documented observations and reflections following each interview. Directly after each conversation, the researcher recorded field notes that included descriptive observations and reflective comments about the interview context, participant responses, and initial insights related to pastoral mentoring.

Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview protocol used in this study consisted of guided questions which were organized to explore the participants' background, mentoring experiences, mentoring practices, and perceived outcomes of mentoring relationships. These questions served as guiding prompts rather than a rigid script, allowing the researcher to follow the natural flow of conversation and explore themes that arose during the interview process.

Background

1. Describe your ministry context and role.
2. How do you define an emerging leader?

Experience

3. Describe your experience mentoring emerging leaders.
4. What does mentoring look like in your regular ministry rhythm?
5. How did you begin mentoring in this way?

Practice

6. What do you intentionally try to cultivate in those you mentor?
7. Describe a mentoring relationship that stands out to you.
8. How do you structure mentoring conversations?
9. What practices best support spiritual growth?
10. What practices best support ministry competence?

Outcomes

11. What changes have you observed in those you mentor?
12. How do you recognize mentoring impact?
13. Have there been any unexpected outcomes?

Reflection

14. What challenges have you faced in mentoring emerging leaders?
15. What would you do differently in future mentoring relationships?

During the interviews, additional probing follow-up prompts were used when appropriate to clarify responses and explore participant experiences more fully. These prompts encouraged participants to provide concrete examples, describe specific mentoring conversations, and reflect on the theological convictions that shaped their mentoring practices. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher began reviewing and analyzing the interview data.

Data Analysis

As soon as possible after each interview and always within one week of the meeting, the researcher reviewed the interview recordings and transcripts to become familiar with the data. The researcher utilized transcription tools in producing written transcripts of the interviews while carefully reviewing each transcript for accuracy. This study utilized the constant comparison method of qualitative analysis, which involves continually comparing new pieces of data with previously analyzed data to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across participant responses. Through this process, the researcher refined developing themes and clarified categories within the data.[204]

After the interview transcripts and field notes were prepared and reviewed, the researcher coded the data to identify recurring themes and patterns across participant responses. Coding involved identifying meaningful segments of text that reflected key ideas related to transformational pastoral mentoring practices, leadership development, and perceived outcomes of mentoring relationships. The analysis focused on identifying common themes and mentoring practices described by senior pastors, patterns related to spiritual formation and leadership development within mentoring relationships, and similarities and differences across participant experiences.

Through this process of coding, comparison, and thematic analysis, broader themes were identified that reflected shared experiences among the pastors interviewed for this study. These themes provided the framework for presenting the findings discussed in Chapter 4.

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[204] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 199-200.

Researcher Position

The researcher serves as a pastor within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and has extensive experience in pastoral ministry and leadership development in the local church. Through years of ministry experience, the researcher has observed the importance of intentional mentoring relationships in the formation of emerging leaders. These experiences shaped the researcher's interest in exploring how pastors mentor developing leaders and how those relationships contribute to spiritual and leadership growth in the local church.

The researcher's experience with pastoral mentoring and leadership development required intentional attention to potential bias throughout the research process. During the interviews and analysis of the data, care was taken to allow participants to describe their own experiences and perspectives without imposing predetermined conclusions. Interview questions were designed to encourage open-ended responses, and the researcher remained attentive to patterns identified in the data rather than attempting to confirm prior assumptions. This reflexive awareness helped the researcher approach the data with openness while seeking to represent the perspectives of participants accurately and faithfully.

Study Limitations

Due to resources and time restraints, this study was limited to six pastors serving in Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregations in western Pennsylvania. While these participants provided meaningful insight into transformational pastoral mentoring practices, the small sample size limited the generalizability of the findings beyond similar

ministry contexts. The denominational context of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the geographic concentration within western Pennsylvania may also have shaped the perspectives represented in the data. As with many qualitative studies, the findings were intended to provide descriptive insight rather than universal conclusions. Readers will need to determine the extent to which these findings may be appropriately applied within their own ministry settings.

Further research may broaden the participant selection to include pastors from other denominational traditions and ministry contexts. Expanding the study to include pastors serving in different regions or ministry environments may provide additional insight into how mentoring practices differ across contexts.

Some of the findings of this study may be transferable to other ministry settings where pastors are engaged in mentoring emerging leaders. However, as with all qualitative studies, the applicability of these findings to other contexts should be considered with care.[205] The results of this study may also have implications for pastoral leadership development and mentoring practices within other church settings.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the methodology used to explore how pastors mentored emerging leaders within the local church. A qualitative research design utilizing semi-structured interviews provided an appropriate framework for examining the experiences and perspectives of senior pastors who were actively engaged in mentoring relationships. Purposeful sampling was used to identify pastors within the Evangelical Presbyterian

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[205] Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 239.

Church who were currently mentoring emerging leaders, and data were collected through recorded interviews and field reflections. The interview data were then analyzed through transcription, coding, and constant comparison to identify recurring themes and patterns across participant responses.

The following chapter presents the findings drawn from the analysis of these interviews. By examining the experiences and perspectives of the participating pastors, several themes became evident regarding how mentoring relationships are formed, the practices pastors employ in mentoring emerging leaders, and the outcomes they observed through these relationships. Chapter 4 presents these themes and supporting evidence from participant interviews and provides a detailed account of transformational pastoral mentoring practices within the context of local church leadership development.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors used transformational leadership mentoring to foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth. This chapter presents the findings from six pastoral interviews and reports the themes that emerged from the data in relation to the research questions guiding this study. The following research questions framed the qualitative analysis and organized the presentation of the findings.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

How do pastors describe their experiences of using transformational leadership mentoring with emerging leaders?

Research Question 2

In what ways do pastors practice mentoring that supports emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth?

Research Question 3

What outcomes do pastors perceive in emerging leaders because of these mentoring relationships?

This chapter begins with an introduction to the participants and their ministry contexts. Following this introduction, the findings are presented according to the research

questions that guided the study. Themes that emerged from the interview data are described and illustrated with representative quotations from the participants.

Introductions to Participants and Context

Six pastors participated in this study. Each participant served as the senior pastor of a congregation in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and ministered in churches located in western Pennsylvania. All participants brought substantial pastoral experience to their ministries, having served for many years in pastoral leadership roles. The congregations represented in the study reflected ministry dynamics typical of mid-sized churches. To protect the confidentiality of both the participants and their congregations, pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter. Although the pastors represented a range of ministry contexts, including small-town, suburban, and urban settings, they shared the common responsibility of shepherding congregations while investing relationally in the development of emerging leaders in the life of the local church.

Pastor Daniel

Pastor Daniel served as a senior pastor and brought more than forty years of pastoral ministry experience to his role. His congregation reflected the ministry dynamics of a mid-sized church with a weekly attendance average of approximately 550, where pastoral leadership involved both shepherding the congregation and equipping lay leaders for ministry. During the interview, Daniel described mentoring as a relational process centered on spiritual formation and long-term leadership development. He described the importance of investing personally in emerging leaders through ongoing conversations, shared ministry experiences, and intentional encouragement. He noted the role of

Scripture, reflection, and pastoral presence in shaping emerging leaders. Overall, Daniel's perspective portrayed mentoring as a pastoral practice that prioritizes character formation, spiritual maturity, and faithful service in the life of the church.

Pastor Andrew

Pastor Andrew described leadership development as a process that unfolds gradually as emerging leaders learn to interpret ministry experiences through the lens of Scripture. During the interview, he explained that mentoring in his congregation often occurred through shared engagement with biblical texts and conversations about how those texts inform pastoral decision-making. Rather than immediately offering answers to ministry challenges, Andrew frequently encouraged emerging leaders to reflect on what God was teaching them through their experiences and to explore how those lessons were shaping their leadership. He noted that these mentoring conversations often arose naturally through ongoing pastoral interaction rather than through a structured program. Pastor Andrew brought twenty-five years of pastoral ministry experience to his role as senior pastor, and the congregation he served averaged approximately two hundred in weekly worship attendance. His perspective presented mentoring as a pastoral practice that formed leaders through Scripture, reflection, and sustained ministry relationships.

Pastor Michael

When speaking about mentoring emerging leaders, Pastor Michael repeatedly returned to the importance of learning through shared ministry experiences. Rather than separating leadership development from the daily work of the church, he described mentoring as something that unfolded naturally as emerging leaders participated in real

ministry opportunities. These experiences provided occasions for reflection, guidance, and encouragement as leaders grew in both confidence and discernment. Michael observed that effective mentoring required patience and a willingness to walk with emerging leaders over time as they matured in their faith and leadership capacity. He brought eighteen years of pastoral ministry experience to his role as senior pastor, and the congregation he served averaged approximately 275 in weekly worship attendance. In this mid-sized church context, Michael sought to cultivate leaders who were prepared not only with ministry skills but also with the character and spiritual maturity necessary for long-term service in the church.

Pastor Samuel

For Pastor Samuel, mentoring emerging leaders was intricately connected to the everyday work of pastoral shepherding. Throughout the interview, he described leadership development growing naturally through relationships formed in the life of the church rather than through a formal mentoring program. Samuel stressed the importance of knowing emerging leaders personally, walking alongside them through ministry situations, and helping them reflect on how God was shaping their character and calling. These mentoring relationships often developed through ordinary pastoral interactions such as shared ministry responsibilities, conversations, and prayer. Serving as a senior pastor with twenty years of pastoral ministry experience, Samuel ministered in a congregation with an average weekly worship attendance of approximately 175. His perspective reflected a pastoral commitment to forming leaders through relational presence, spiritual attentiveness, and steady guidance over time.

Pastor Nathan

Pastor Nathan described mentoring emerging leaders as an intentional investment in the spiritual and leadership development of others in the life of the church. During the interview, he spoke about the importance of identifying potential leaders and then walking with them as they grew in confidence, responsibility, and ministry effectiveness. He presented mentoring as involving both encouragement and honest guidance, helping emerging leaders to recognize their gifts while also challenging them to grow. Nathan noted that these mentoring relationships often developed through regular conversations, shared ministry experiences, and opportunities for emerging leaders to take on meaningful leadership roles. With twenty-five years of pastoral ministry experience, he served as a senior pastor in a congregation averaging approximately 240 in weekly worship attendance. In describing his approach, Nathan portrayed mentoring as a deliberate means of helping emerging leaders' step into meaningful responsibility in ways that served both their growth and the needs of the congregation.

Pastor David

Pastor David spoke about mentoring emerging leaders as an intentional investment in the next generation of church leadership. Throughout the interview, he described mentoring as a relational process in which emerging leaders were given opportunities to participate meaningfully in ministry while receiving guidance and encouragement from more experienced leaders. He explained that leadership growth often occurred through practical ministry experiences that allowed emerging leaders to develop both confidence and discernment. David noted that regular conversations, shared

ministry responsibilities, and pastoral encouragement played a key role in helping emerging leaders reflect on what God was teaching them through their service in the church. Pastor David brought thirty-six years of pastoral ministry experience to his role as senior pastor, and the congregation he served averaged approximately two hundred in weekly worship attendance. His perspective portrayed mentoring as a long-term pastoral investment aimed at forming leaders who were spiritually mature and prepared for faithful ministry.

Pastors' Mentoring Experiences

The first research question explored how pastors described their experiences of using transformational leadership mentoring with emerging leaders. Participants described mentoring primarily in relational and formational terms. Rather than focusing on formal mentoring programs or structured leadership pipelines, participants consistently portrayed mentoring as a relational process that developed through shared ministry experiences, ongoing conversations, and personal pastoral investment. Several common patterns emerged across the interviews in the ways pastors understood and practiced these mentoring relationships. These themes included the significant role of spiritual formation in the inner life of leaders, the relational nature of mentoring, the integration of mentoring into everyday ministry rhythms, and a shared dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit in shaping emerging leaders.

Leadership Formation Begins with the Inner Life

One consistent theme in the interviews was the attention pastors placed on the inner life and spiritual formation of emerging leaders. Participants described leadership

development primarily in terms of character, spiritual maturity, and a deepening relationship with Christ rather than merely the acquisition of ministry skills or organizational competencies. Several pastors noted that mentoring relationships created space for emerging leaders to reflect on their spiritual lives and cultivate personal integrity before assuming greater leadership responsibility in the church. As Pastor Andrew explained, mentoring conversations often focused on helping leaders discern "what God might be teaching them through their ministry experiences." Similarly, Pastor Samuel described mentoring as an opportunity to pray with emerging leaders and encourage them to seek wisdom from God as they navigated ministry responsibilities. These descriptions present leadership development as a process rooted in spiritual formation, in which growth in faith and character provided the foundation for faithful leadership in the life of the church.

Several participants noted that credibility in pastoral leadership flowed from spiritual maturity rather than personality, charisma, or natural leadership ability. Participants repeatedly describe leadership development as arising from the ongoing formation of a leader's spiritual life. Pastor Michael reflected on this dynamic, explaining that mentoring often involved helping leaders recognize how God was shaping their character through the everyday experiences of ministry. As he noted, "a lot of leadership development happens when you step back and ask what God is doing in your life through these situations." Instead of concentrating primarily on technical ministry skills, these pastors stressed the importance of cultivating humility, spiritual attentiveness, and faithfulness in the ordinary rhythms of daily life. Leadership formation was understood as

the gradual shaping of a leader's character through spiritual growth and reflective engagement with ministry experiences.

Other participants pointed to the role of pastoral relationships in cultivating this kind of spiritual formation. Mentoring was often described as an extension of pastoral shepherding in which leaders were formed through sustained relational investment and shared ministry experiences over time. Pastor Samuel reflected on this dynamic, explaining that mentoring involved "walking with people spiritually as they grow into the responsibilities God is giving them." Similarly, Pastor Nathan spoke about the importance of remaining present with emerging leaders as they navigated the challenges of ministry, noting that effective mentoring required "coming alongside leaders and encouraging them as they grow." In these relationships, leadership formation unfolded gradually through ongoing conversation, prayer, and reflection on ministry experiences. Participants described mentoring not as a short-term training process but as a long-term relational commitment through which spiritual maturity and leadership responsibility developed together.

"Mentoring is really about joining people on their spiritual journey," Pastor David explained as he reflected on how leaders develop over time in the life of the church. His comments pointed to a recurring pattern across the interviews: leadership formation begins not with formal leadership training but with the spiritual development of the leader. David described mentoring relationships as opportunities to walk alongside emerging leaders while remaining attentive to how God was shaping their character and calling through the experiences of ministry. Instead of centering on structured leadership programs, he stressed the importance of long-term relational investment and spiritual

attentiveness to the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life. From this perspective, mentoring served as a pastoral practice through which leaders were gradually formed as God worked through relationships, ministry experiences, and spiritual reflection.

These perspectives showed that the pastors in this study consistently understood leadership formation as beginning with the inner spiritual life of emerging leaders. Participants repeatedly described mentoring relationships as relational environments in which leaders were encouraged to grow in their relationship with Christ while reflecting on the realities of ministry. Through these conversations and shared experiences, emerging leaders developed discernment, spiritual maturity, and the character necessary for faithful leadership within the church. Mentoring functioned as a relational and transformative process through which spiritual growth and leadership development unfolded together over time.

Mentoring Relationships Are Primarily Relational Rather Than Programmatic

A second theme in the interviews was the relational nature of mentoring relationships. Participants consistently described mentoring as something that developed through personal relationships instead of formalized programs or structured leadership pathways. As Pastor Samuel explained, "mentoring really grows out of relationships and walking with people over time." While several pastors acknowledged that churches may offer leadership training opportunities or ministry structures for developing leaders, they observed that the most meaningful leadership formation occurred in relationships characterized by trust, availability, and shared ministry experiences. In these relational settings, emerging leaders observed pastoral leadership and engaged directly in ministry.

These interactions created opportunities for questions, reflection on ministry situations, and encouragement as leaders matured in both faith and leadership responsibility.

Pastors frequently portrayed mentoring as a sustained relational investment in the lives of emerging leaders. Participants described mentoring as developing through conversations, shared ministry responsibilities, and everyday interactions in the life of the church, not primarily through predetermined curricula or formal mentoring schedules. “A lot of mentoring happens simply by being together in ministry,” Pastor Michael observed. Pastor Nathan offered a similar perspective, explaining that “leadership development really grows out of walking alongside people over time.” These ongoing interactions created space for encouragement, reflection on ministry experiences, and pastoral guidance as emerging leaders grew in their sense of calling and responsibility. Leadership development unfolded gradually as mentors walked alongside emerging leaders and supported their growth in both faith and ministry leadership.

Several participants portrayed mentoring relationships as developing organically through the everyday rhythms of ministry. Opportunities for leadership formation often arose through ordinary pastoral interactions such as conversations, shared responsibilities, and prayer. Pastor Samuel reflected on this dynamic, noting that many mentoring moments grew naturally out of regular ministry life rather than planned mentoring sessions. As Samuel explained, “a lot of those mentoring conversations just happen naturally as we’re serving together and talking about ministry.” Pastor Michael similarly observed that leadership development often occurred as emerging leaders participated alongside experienced pastors in real ministry situations.

"Mentoring is really about joining people on their journey," Pastor David explained as he reflected on his approach to developing emerging leaders. His comments illustrated the relational character of mentoring described throughout the interviews. David spoke about mentoring as something that developed through ongoing conversations and shared life experiences in the everyday life of the church. Instead of guiding leaders through a predetermined mentoring structure, he focused on walking alongside them over time, offering encouragement and spiritual guidance as opportunities arose. Several pastors observed that mentoring relationships often grew out of genuine friendship and personal connection. As Pastor Samuel explained, "a lot of mentoring grows naturally out of friendship and spending time together in ministry." Through friendship, reflection, and continued interaction in ministry, emerging leaders gradually matured in both their faith and their capacity for leadership.

Pastors in this study consistently indicated that mentoring relationships required time, trust, and sustained personal investment. Leadership development was not portrayed as a quick or programmatic process but as something that unfolded gradually through ongoing relationships. Although several participants acknowledged that structured leadership initiatives may contribute to preparing emerging leaders, they viewed relational mentoring as the primary context in which leaders grew in faith, maturity, and leadership capacity in the life of the church. Through long-term relational engagement, emerging leaders observed, reflected, and developed the character necessary for faithful service.

Mentoring Occurs Within the Rhythms of Everyday Ministry

The interviews pointed to a third theme: mentoring frequently occurred through the ordinary rhythms of everyday ministry. Leadership development was commonly portrayed as unfolding as emerging leaders participated in ministry activities alongside experienced pastors. Many of these transformative moments arose in the normal work of pastoral ministry, as leaders spent time together in conversation, prayer, and shared responsibility in the life of the church. As Pastor Nathan observed, "a lot of leadership development happens in the middle of ministry, not in a classroom."

Several pastors spoke about how mentoring developed while working together in the life of the church. Pastor Michael illustrated this dynamic by recounting a pastoral visit where he invited an emerging leader to accompany him in serving the Lord's Supper at a Christian gathering outside the church. Initially, the developing leader observed as Michael led the service. Over time, however, Michael gradually entrusted greater responsibility to him, eventually allowing the emerging leader to lead the observance of the Lord's Supper himself while Michael observed. Following the service, they reflected together on the experience. As Pastor Michael described this process, "sometimes the best way for someone to learn ministry is simply to come along and participate in it." Mentoring occurred through shared ministry experiences followed by reflection, allowing emerging leaders to grow in confidence, discernment, and pastoral responsibility.

Other participants similarly observed that mentoring often took place during ministry instead of apart from it. Pastor Andrew described mentoring conversations that developed through shared engagement with Scripture and ministry leadership in the church's discipleship structures. Instead of simply providing answers to leadership

questions, he suggested that mentoring often involved helping emerging leaders to reflect on their experiences in ministry and consider how God might be shaping them through those situations. As Andrew reflected, “a lot of leadership development happens when people are actually serving and then we stop and talk about what’s happening and what God might be teaching through it.” Pastor Samuel likewise pointed to the importance of observing leaders in real ministry contexts before reflecting on those experiences together. In his words, “people grow when they can see leadership happening and then process what they experienced.” Through these interactions, emerging leaders developed greater confidence and maturity as they assumed increasing responsibility in ministry.

Pastor David’s interview also reflected this theme. He portrayed mentoring relationships as developing through ongoing conversations that occurred naturally as pastors and emerging leaders shared life and ministry together. These interactions often included discussing challenges from ministry, exploring questions of faith, and reflecting on how Scripture speaks into everyday situations. As David observed, “mentoring really happens as you walk with people over time and talk about what God is doing in their lives and in the ministry.” Through these kinds of conversations, emerging leaders could process their experiences in ministry and grow in their understanding of leadership and discipleship.

Mentoring in these pastoral contexts was intricately connected to the daily life of ministry. Leadership development was not separated from the ongoing work of the church but occurred through shared service, reflection on ministry experiences, and sustained relational investment over time. Mentoring unfolded through the ordinary rhythms of church life instead of through formal leadership programs.

Dependence on the Holy Spirit in Leadership Formation

Another important pattern in the interviews was the pastors' attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of emerging leaders. Participants frequently described mentoring not simply as a leadership strategy but as participation in the spiritual work God was already accomplishing in the lives of those being mentored. Pastor David captured this perspective when he explained that his approach to mentoring was not driven by a predetermined plan but by a desire to walk with people spiritually, noting that he seeks to "join you where you're at…other than closer to Jesus." Pastors viewed their role less as architects of leadership development and more as shepherds who sought to recognize and encourage the work of God in others.

Several pastors described moments when mentoring required attentiveness to how God was shaping a leader's life through ministry experiences. Pastor Andrew noted that mentoring conversations often involved helping emerging leaders discern what God might be teaching them through situations. He encouraged leaders to reflect on how their experiences were contributing to their spiritual growth and understanding of ministry before offering answers or solutions. Similarly, Pastor Nathan described mentoring as walking alongside people as they grow, explaining that the common thread in his mentoring relationships often involves "presence, prayer, encouragement…you meet with people where they are and try to help them take the next step for them to be used of Jesus." Pastor David expressed a comparable perspective, explaining that his role was often to help leaders gain confidence in how God was working through them. He noted that he frequently encouraged emerging leaders simply to trust themselves and step

forward in faith while he remains nearby to support them: “Trust yourself, go for it. I will be right here. I will watch.”

Other participants spoke similarly about mentoring as a process guided by spiritual discernment. Pastor Samuel described mentoring relationships as opportunities to pray with emerging leaders and help them seek wisdom as they navigated leadership challenges. Reflecting on these interactions, he stressed the importance of spiritual guidance and prayer as leaders sought God’s direction together. Pastor Nathan likewise pointed to the importance of spiritual attentiveness, explaining that mentoring required pastors to walk closely with emerging leaders while trusting that God was shaping them through their experiences. As he described this posture, he noted that mentoring often involves “presence, prayer, and encouragement” as leaders walk together through the realities of ministry. These comments showed that prayer and spiritual attentiveness were not peripheral to mentoring but were woven into the relationships themselves. Questions such as “How can we pray for each other?” often became a natural part of these mentoring interactions.

These perspectives showed that the pastors in this study understood mentoring as a deeply spiritual process. Leadership development was not viewed merely as the transfer of knowledge or ministry skills but as participation in the ongoing work of God in the lives of emerging leaders. Mentoring was therefore understood as a posture of spiritual attentiveness in which pastors sought to recognize, encourage, and cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of future leaders.

Summary of Pastors' Mentoring Experiences

Pastors in this study described their experiences of mentoring emerging leaders primarily in relational and spiritual terms. Through the interviews, participants consistently indicated that leadership development began with the inner life of the leader and grew through relationships characterized by trust, guidance, and shared ministry experiences. Pastors described mentoring as a relational process that unfolded naturally through the rhythms of pastoral ministry rather than relying primarily on formal programs or structured leadership pathways.

Several themes illustrate how senior pastors experienced mentoring relationships with emerging leaders. Participants identified spiritual formation as the foundation of leadership development, pointing to the importance of character, faithfulness, and a growing relationship with Christ. Mentoring relationships were also described as deeply relational rather than programmatic, often developing through personal investment and ongoing conversations. Pastors further noted that mentoring frequently occurred in the everyday work of ministry, where leaders learned through shared experiences and reflection. Participants also described the importance of attentiveness to the work of the Holy Spirit in shaping emerging leaders. Together, these themes suggest that pastors experienced mentoring as a relational and spiritually grounded process that supported the formation of faithful leaders in the church. Having examined pastors' experiences mentoring emerging leaders, the following section presents the findings related to Research Question 2.

Pastors' Mentoring Practices

The second research question examined ways pastors practiced mentoring that supported emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth. Senior pastors in this study described mentoring as a set of intentional practices that fostered the spiritual and ministry development of emerging leaders. While participants consistently identified the relational nature of mentoring relationships as foundational, they also described specific practices that encouraged growth over time. Although the approaches described by participants varied according to personality and ministry context, several common mentoring practices were evident across the interviews. These practices frequently took shape within the normal rhythms of pastoral ministry and included engaging emerging leaders in Scripture-centered conversations, reflecting together on ministry experiences, providing opportunities for meaningful leadership responsibility, and walking patiently with leaders as they matured in their calling. The following themes illustrate how pastors described practicing mentoring in ways that supported the spiritual and ministry growth of emerging leaders.

Scripture-Centered Mentoring Practices

One consistent mentoring practice was engaging emerging leaders with Scripture as part of their leadership development. Several pastors explained that mentoring relationships often included reading, discussing, and reflecting on biblical passages together. Participants described using Scripture as a primary framework for shaping the spiritual lives and leadership perspectives of emerging leaders. It was not treated simply as content for teaching or preaching. Pastor Michael described mentoring as being

intricately connected to a leader's spiritual life, explaining that mentoring conversations often involved "encouraging them in their own walk with the Lord and following after Jesus." Similarly, Pastor Daniel reflected on earlier discipleship practices that focused on helping leaders engage Scripture personally, recalling that mentors would begin by teaching people "how to have a quiet time…how to read the Bible."

Pastor Andrew described mentoring practices within his church that centered on studying biblical texts together in preparation for ministry leadership. In these settings, emerging leaders gathered to examine Scripture collaboratively before leading others in teaching or ministry. Andrew explained that mentoring often involved helping leaders discern how God was shaping their faith and calling through engagement with Scripture and ministry experience. As he described these conversations, he noted that mentors often walked with leaders as they considered their strengths and where God was calling them. Andrew also noted that leadership grounded in Scripture primarily serves and lifts others up. Through these shared times in Scripture, emerging leaders developed greater theological depth while also gaining confidence to guide others in biblical reflection and ministry.

Other pastors described these practices in more informal mentoring contexts. Reflecting on his mentoring relationships, Pastor Samuel explained that conversations with emerging leaders often involved prayerful discussion of biblical passages as they sought guidance for ministry challenges. As he described these interactions, Samuel noted that mentoring frequently meant "praying with leaders and helping them seek wisdom as they navigated leadership challenges." These conversations regularly included biblical passages that related to the situations leaders were encountering in ministry.

Through these prayer-guided discussions, emerging leaders could connect their experiences with broader biblical themes while seeking wisdom from Scripture as they made ministry decisions.

Pastor David spoke about the vital role of Scripture in mentoring relationships. During the interview, he described intentionally encouraging emerging leaders to engage biblical texts personally instead of simply receiving answers from a mentor. Reflecting on his approach to leadership development, David explained that "what I ultimately want to help guys do is learn to read Scripture for themselves." In practice, this often meant inviting emerging leaders to identify and interpret biblical passages and consider how those passages related to the situations they were facing in life and ministry. In these conversations, David sometimes introduced a passage and then asked leaders to reflect on its meaning, saying, for example, "Let me read you one Bible verse and then I want you to tell me what you think that it says…I want to teach you how to read that story in a way that you might get something from it." Through this process, mentoring conversations became opportunities for leaders to wrestle with Scripture and develop their own understanding of how biblical truth applies to life and ministry. In David's view, Scripture served as the guiding authority for leadership formation, because mentoring relationships were intended to "always focus on the Scripture and then always kind of allowing Scripture to be the thing that dictates life."

Scripture functioned as a central resource in the mentoring practices of the pastors in this study. Participants described mentoring relationships in which emerging leaders were encouraged to engage biblical texts regularly as they reflected on life, ministry, and leadership challenges. Through structured Bible study, reflective conversations, or

informal engagement with the text, Scripture served as a transformative influence that shaped both the spiritual development and leadership practices of emerging leaders. In these mentoring relationships, Scripture was not treated merely as instructional material but as a living authority that guided reflection, discernment, and growth in life and ministry. In addition to engaging Scripture together, participants described mentoring practices that involved reflecting with emerging leaders on their experiences in ministry.

Reflective Conversations Following Ministry Experiences

Participants also described mentoring practices that involved reflecting on ministry experiences. Mentoring frequently took place through conversations that followed real ministry events. These reflective discussions provided opportunities for emerging leaders to consider what they had observed, how they had responded to situations, and what insights could be drawn from those experiences. Through this process, mentors helped emerging leaders discern what God might be teaching them as they continued to grow in ministry and leadership.

Pastor Michael described mentoring practices that involved reflecting with emerging leaders after shared ministry experiences. Reflecting on this process, Michael observed that "a lot of leadership development happens when people are actually serving and then we stop and talk about what's happening and what God might be teaching through it." In these conversations, mentors and emerging leaders revisited ministry situations, considering both the practical outcomes and the spiritual lessons that grew out of them. As Michael explained, "sometimes the best learning happens when someone can see ministry taking place and then reflect on it afterward." These reflective conversations

helped emerging leaders develop greater insight into their leadership decisions while also deepening their awareness of how God was shaping them through ministry service.

Reflection on ministry experiences also formed a vital component of Pastor Andrew's mentoring of emerging leaders. Andrew explained that much of leadership development occurred as mentors "work alongside [emergent leaders] to help them grow in their faith and to understand what leadership really looks like in serving others." He noted that his mentoring often involved showing emergent leaders "what leadership looks like in practice," allowing emerging leaders to interpret their ministry experiences more thoughtfully. Through these reflective discussions, emerging leaders developed greater clarity about their leadership gifts and about the ways God was shaping them through ministry.

Reflective conversations following ministry experiences functioned as a practical mentoring tool in pastoral ministry. By discussing ministry experiences and exploring their meaning together, pastors helped emerging leaders develop wisdom, confidence, and a deeper understanding of their calling. These conversations created space for emerging leaders to interpret their experiences, receive guidance, and grow in discernment as they continued to mature in leadership. In addition to these reflective conversations, pastors described mentoring practices that involved providing emerging leaders with meaningful opportunities to exercise leadership responsibility.

Providing Opportunities for Meaningful Leadership Responsibility

Another mentoring practice described by participants involved intentionally giving emerging leaders opportunities to serve in meaningful ministry roles. Instead of

limiting leadership development to observation or discussion alone, pastors often described inviting emerging leaders to participate directly in ministry responsibilities in the church. As Pastor Nathan explained, “Here in the local church, you’re going to have opportunities to serve and be shaped and molded.” These opportunities allowed emerging leaders to gain practical experience while receiving encouragement and guidance from more experienced leaders.

Several pastors explained that leadership responsibility helped emerging leaders develop confidence and discernment. Pastor Michael described situations in which emerging leaders were entrusted with ministry tasks or leadership roles and then encouraged to reflect on what had taken place. As he explained, “Leadership development really happens when people are actually involved in ministry, not just watching it.” Pastor Samuel described the same pattern in which emerging leaders were given opportunities to serve in the life of the church. Reflecting on these opportunities, he observed that “people grow when they’re given the opportunity to step into ministry and try it.” Through these experiences, emerging leaders grew in their understanding of ministry while receiving feedback and support from their mentors.

Pastor Samuel described the importance of allowing emerging leaders to participate in ministry leadership in the life of the church. In his interview, he mentioned that leadership development often occurred as individuals became involved in real ministry settings and learned through experience. As Samuel explained, “A lot of leadership development happens when people are actually involved in ministry and learning as they go.” By observing leaders in real ministry contexts and gradually

assuming responsibility themselves, emerging leaders developed both practical skills and greater confidence in their calling.

Other participants noted that providing leadership responsibility communicated trust and affirmation to leaders. Pastor Nathan noted that mentoring often involved identifying the gifts and potential of emerging leaders and encouraging them to take steps into greater responsibility. Reflecting on this process, he explained, “Part of mentoring is helping people recognize how God has gifted them and then giving them opportunities to step forward and use those gifts.” Pastor David described the same practice as he observed, “When people are given real opportunities to serve, they begin to see how God has prepared them for leadership.” These experiences helped emerging leaders recognize their calling while continuing to grow under pastoral guidance.

Leadership responsibility functioned as a key component of mentoring. By involving emerging leaders in meaningful ministry opportunities, pastors created environments in which leaders developed their abilities, deepened their commitment to service, and grew in confidence as they served in the life of the local church. These opportunities allowed emerging leaders to learn through experience while receiving encouragement and guidance from more experienced leaders. In addition to providing opportunities for leadership responsibility, pastors described the importance of maintaining a patient and long-term investment in the lives of emerging leaders as they continued to develop in their faith and ministry.

Patient and Long-Term Investment in Emerging Leaders

A final mentoring practice described by participants involved maintaining a patient, long-term investment in the lives of emerging leaders. Pastors repeatedly observed that leadership development did not occur quickly and required sustained relational commitment over time. Reflecting on his own approach to mentoring, Pastor David explained that he was "never in a hurry…the pace is one that's just to take life as it comes," highlighting the importance of allowing leadership formation to unfold gradually in the rhythms of ministry. Participants therefore described mentoring as a process in which emerging leaders matured over time through continued guidance, encouragement, and spiritual formation.

The development of emerging leaders often unfolded gradually in mentoring relationships. Pastor Samuel observed that leaders typically grew over time as trust deepened and ministry experience accumulated. Reflecting on this approach, he explained that "we would rather go slow in how people really grow into that leadership role rather than just drop them in." Pastor Andrew described the same conviction, noting that leadership formation developed through sustained spiritual development rather than rapid advancement. In his experience, mentoring conversations often focused on helping leaders grow in discernment and spiritual maturity as they assumed increasing ministry responsibilities. As he explained, "sometimes it's as much as twice a month, sometimes it's monthly," which reflected the ongoing rhythm of conversations that supported leaders as they matured over time. Through these sustained relationships and shared ministry experiences, pastors walked alongside emerging leaders as they navigated challenges and continued to develop in their leadership roles.

This long-term perspective was especially evident in Pastor David's reflections on mentoring. During the interview, he described his approach as walking alongside individuals on their spiritual growth and allowing relationships to develop naturally over time. David explained that "I love to join you where you're at…and just kind of journey alongside of you," which highlighted the relational and patient character of mentoring relationships. For David, mentoring involved attentiveness, relational presence, and a willingness to walk with emerging leaders as God continued shaping them through their experiences.

Participants viewed mentoring as a long-term investment more than a short-term leadership initiative. By maintaining consistent relational involvement in the lives of emerging leaders, pastors created space for growth that unfolded gradually as leaders matured in both their faith and ministry responsibilities. These findings indicate that leadership development in pastoral mentoring relationships often occurred through sustained presence, encouragement, and shared ministry over time. These pastors practiced mentoring through Scripture, reflection, responsibility, and patient presence to support the spiritual and ministry development of emerging leaders.

Summary of Pastors' Mentoring Practices

Senior pastors in this study described several practices that supported their mentoring of emerging leaders. Although individual approaches varied according to personality and ministry context, participants consistently identified practices that contributed to both the spiritual and practical development of leaders. These practices

typically occurred in the ongoing rhythms of pastoral ministry rather than through formal mentoring programs.

Four primary practices were evident across the interviews. Pastors frequently engaged emerging leaders in Scripture-centered conversations that encouraged reflection on biblical teaching and its application to ministry. Reflective discussions following ministry experiences also helped leaders interpret challenges and grow in discernment. Participants described providing emerging leaders with meaningful leadership responsibilities as a way of developing confidence and practical ministry skills. Finally, pastors highlighted the importance of patient, long-term investment in the lives of emerging leaders as they matured in their faith and leadership capacity. These practices demonstrate how mentoring relationships contributed to the spiritual formation and leadership development of emerging leaders in the local church.

Pastors' Perceived Outcomes

The third research question explored what outcomes pastors perceived in emerging leaders because of these mentoring relationships. Senior pastors in this study described several outcomes they observed in the lives of emerging leaders who participated in mentoring relationships. Although participants did not typically measure these outcomes in formal or programmatic ways, they consistently identified noticeable patterns of growth among those they mentored. These outcomes often became evident over time as emerging leaders matured spiritually, gained confidence in ministry, and developed a deeper sense of calling and responsibility in the life of the local church.

Participants consistently noted that mentoring relationships contributed to both personal and leadership development among emerging leaders. In many cases, mentoring relationships resulted in ongoing relational connections that continued even after emerging leaders assumed new responsibilities or ministry roles. Common themes observed were growth in spiritual maturity, greater confidence in ministry responsibilities, and an increased readiness to serve others in leadership roles.

Growth in Spiritual Maturity and Character

One of the most frequently described outcomes of mentoring relationships was increasing spiritual growth, maturity, and character development of emerging leaders over time. Pastor Michael reflected on this connection as he said that "leadership development is really the process of becoming more like Christ." This growth often included a deeper commitment to personal faith, greater attentiveness to spiritual disciplines, and a growing desire to live faithfully in response to God's calling.

Several pastors described mentoring relationships as creating an environment in which emerging leaders experienced noticeable growth in spiritual maturity and character. Pastor Andrew explained that mentoring often involved helping leaders reflect more deeply on their spiritual lives, noting, "One of the things I try to do is help them pay attention to what God might be doing in their own hearts as they're serving." Pastor Samuel described the transformative nature of mentoring relationships, observing that "as people walk through ministry and talk about it together, you begin to see them grow in humility and discernment over time." Pastor Nathan explaining that through ongoing guidance and ministry opportunities he often saw leaders develop "a deeper stability in

their faith and a clearer sense of responsibility for serving others." Together, these accounts show that mentoring relationships contributed to meaningful formation as emerging leaders grew in character, humility, and attentiveness to God's work in their lives.

Pastors consistently described spiritual maturity and character formation as central outcomes of mentoring relationships. Participants described mentoring as contributing not merely to leadership techniques or ministry skills but to the formation of leaders whose lives reflected growing faithfulness, humility, and spiritual maturity.

Increased Leadership Confidence

Pastors described increased confidence as a significant outcome that developed through mentoring relationships. As emerging leaders were invited to participate in ministry responsibilities and reflect on their experiences, many developed greater assurance in their ability to serve and lead in the church. One pastor described observing this transformation as leaders gradually recognized their own capacity for ministry. "They didn't trust their voice at first," he explained, "but over time they began to find their voice and realized they actually could lead." Through mentoring conversations and practical ministry opportunities, emerging leaders became more willing to step forward in leadership roles and contribute their gifts to the life of the congregation.

Several pastors described mentoring relationships as creating a supportive environment in which emerging leaders could attempt new ministry responsibilities without fear of failure. Through ongoing guidance and reflective conversations, mentors helped leaders process challenges and recognize areas of growth. As a result, emerging

leaders often developed greater assurance to lead others and contribute meaningfully to the life of the church. Pastor Michael explained that "Sometimes part of mentoring is giving them opportunities to actually do the work of ministry so they can grow comfortable leading." Pastor Samuel described the same kind of growth. He reflected on watching one specific emerging leader gradually develop confidence as he gained experience and encouragement in the life of the church. "Watching him grow and find his feet and his passion…that's been really fun to see," he noted, describing how mentoring relationships often helped leaders move beyond uncertainty and step more fully into leadership.

Other participants also described confidence growing as emerging leaders began to recognize their gifts and calling. Pastor Nathan explained that when leaders were entrusted with meaningful responsibilities and supported through mentoring relationships, they often grew in their willingness to step forward and serve. Reflecting on this process, he described emerging leaders as individuals who were still being shaped for future ministry but already demonstrating the potential for leadership in the church. "They may not be in a prominent leadership position now, but they're disciples who have the gifts and the calling for greater things," he explained, describing how mentoring relationships helped leaders grow into those opportunities over time. This sense of confidence enabled emerging leaders to assume greater responsibility and participate more fully in the leadership life of the congregation.

Leadership confidence was an important outcome of mentoring relationships. Through encouragement, reflective conversations, and practical ministry experience, emerging leaders gradually developed the assurance necessary to serve faithfully and

effectively in their ministry contexts. As this confidence grew, emerging leaders became increasingly prepared to assume greater responsibility in the ministry life of the local church, which opened the way for expanded opportunities for leadership and service.

Greater Ministry Readiness and Responsibility

Another outcome described by participants was the increased readiness of emerging leaders to assume greater ministry responsibility in the church. As individuals participated in mentoring relationships and engaged in practical ministry opportunities, participants observed that many leaders became increasingly prepared to serve in meaningful leadership roles. This readiness developed gradually as emerging leaders combined ongoing spiritual formation with firsthand ministry experience.

Mentoring relationships contributed to the increased readiness of emerging leaders to assume greater responsibility in the life of the church. As individuals participated in ministry opportunities and reflected on those experiences with mentors, leaders gradually developed the skills, discernment, and confidence necessary for leadership. Through ongoing conversations, shared ministry experiences, and opportunities to serve, emerging leaders gained a clearer understanding of the responsibilities associated with guiding others in ministry. Pastor Michael described intentionally creating opportunities for developing leaders to practice ministry in meaningful settings, explaining that "it wasn't just practice, it was an actual real service…a way that he could get comfortable leading through a community service and giving a little ten- or fifteen-minute devotional." As leaders reflected on these opportunities and continued serving in the life of the congregation, pastors observed

increasing readiness among emerging leaders to assume greater responsibility and contribute more fully to the leadership and ministry of the church.

Participants consistently described mentoring relationships as helping prepare emerging leaders for ministry service. Through sustained relational investment, practical ministry experience, and ongoing pastoral guidance, emerging leaders gradually developed the competence and readiness necessary to serve effectively in the life of the church. As these leaders matured in their faith and ministry responsibilities, the influence of mentoring relationships often extended beyond initial leadership development. Participants described ongoing relational connections that continued over time and contributed to the multiplication of leadership in the congregation.

Ongoing Relational Influence and Leadership Multiplication

Participants described mentoring relationships as continuing beyond the initial stages of leadership development. Several pastors noted that mentoring relationships often developed into long-term connections that continued even as emerging leaders assumed greater ministry responsibilities. These relationships frequently remained an ongoing source of encouragement, accountability, and spiritual support. Pastors observed that such sustained relational investment contributed to a broader culture of leadership development in the church. As emerging leaders matured in their faith and ministry experience, they often began investing in others in similar ways, creating an environment in which leadership development became a shared responsibility in the life of the congregation.

Several participants described the lasting relational nature of these mentoring connections. Pastor David reflected that mentoring relationships often continued even after individuals moved into new ministry contexts, explaining that "even guys here that have come and left…still connected with a phone call or this or that and an appreciation for the ongoing journey that they're on." Participants also described situations in which those who had been mentored later stepped into leadership roles themselves. Pastor Michael described mentoring several individuals who later sensed a call to pastoral ministry, noting that some of those leaders were eventually ordained and continued serving in the church or in other ministry contexts.

These observations suggest that mentoring relationships often extended beyond the initial formation of leaders and contributed to ongoing relational influence in the church. As emerging leaders matured and assumed greater responsibility, many began investing in the development of others. In this way, mentoring relationships not only supported the growth of individual leaders through relational influence but also contributed to the multiplication of leadership in the congregation. The following section summarizes these outcomes.

Summary of Pastors' Perceived Outcomes

Senior pastors in this study who mentored emerging leaders described four outcomes which became evident over time as emerging leaders matured in their faith, developed confidence in ministry responsibilities, and demonstrated increasing readiness to serve within the life of the church.

First, pastors observed growth in spiritual maturity and character as emerging leaders deepened their relationships with Christ and developed greater faithfulness in their lives. Second, participants noted increasing leadership confidence among those who were mentored, particularly as leaders gained experience and encouragement in supportive mentoring relationships. Third, pastors described how mentoring contributed to greater readiness for ministry responsibility as emerging leaders developed both competence and discernment through ministry experience. Finally, participants observed that mentoring relationships often resulted in ongoing relational influence and the multiplication of leadership, as leaders who had been mentored began investing in the development of others in the life of the church. Together, these outcomes showed how pastors perceived mentoring relationships as contributing to the transformation and development of leaders in their ministry contexts.

Summary of Findings

This chapter presented the findings from six qualitative interviews with senior pastors serving in Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregations in western Pennsylvania. The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors used transformational leadership mentoring to foster the spiritual and ministry growth of emerging leaders and to understand how these mentoring relationships contributed to leadership development in the local church. Through these interviews, pastors described their experiences of mentoring emerging leaders, the practices they used to support leadership development, and the outcomes they observed in the lives of those they mentored.

Several important patterns were evident regarding how pastors understood and practiced mentoring. Participants consistently described mentoring as a relational and spiritually grounded process and not merely a formal leadership program. Leadership development was understood to begin with the inner life of the leader and to grow through relationships characterized by trust, encouragement, and shared ministry experiences. Pastors frequently noted that mentoring occurred in everyday rhythms of ministry and often involved Scripture-centered conversations, reflective discussions following ministry experiences, opportunities for emerging leaders to assume meaningful leadership responsibilities, and sustained relational investment in the lives of those being mentored.

Participants described several outcomes that resulted from these mentoring relationships. Pastors observed growth in spiritual maturity and character among emerging leaders, along with increasing confidence in ministry leadership. Mentoring relationships contributed to greater readiness for leadership responsibility as emerging leaders developed both practical ministry experience and spiritual discernment. In addition, pastors noted that mentoring relationships often extended beyond initial leadership development and contributed to ongoing relational influence and the multiplication of leadership as emerging leaders began investing in others. Together, these findings illustrated how transformational leadership mentoring contributed to the formation, development, and multiplication of leaders in the life of the local church.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors use transformational leadership mentoring to foster emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth. Chapter 2 reviewed literature in four areas that informed this study: biblical and Reformed theological foundations for pastoral mentoring, transformational leadership theory, mentoring theory, and leadership development in the local church. Together, these areas provided a framework for understanding how leadership development occurs in Christian ministry contexts and how mentoring relationships contribute to the formation of emerging leaders.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do pastors describe their experiences of using transformational leadership mentoring with emerging leaders?
2. In what ways do pastors practice mentoring that supports emerging leaders' spiritual and ministry growth?
3. What outcomes do pastors perceive in emerging leaders because of these mentoring relationships?

Chapter 4 presented the findings from interviews with senior pastors serving in mid-sized Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregations in western Pennsylvania. Through these interviews, participants described their experiences mentoring emerging leaders, the practices they used to foster leadership development, and the outcomes they observed through those relationships. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to interpret these findings

considering the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and to consider their implications for pastoral leadership and ministry practice. This chapter concludes with recommendations for ministry practice and suggestions for further research related to transformational leadership mentoring within the local church.

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study reviewed literature in the areas of biblical and Reformed theological foundations for pastoral mentoring, transformational leadership theory, mentoring theory, and leadership development in the local church, and it analyzed interview data from six pastors serving in Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregations in western Pennsylvania. The literature review showed that leadership development in the church is often fostered through relational discipleship, spiritual formation, and mentoring relationships that encourage both personal and ministry growth among emerging leaders.

The interviews revealed that pastors consistently described mentoring as a relational and spiritually grounded process embedded in the everyday life of ministry and not chiefly as a formal leadership development program. Participants emphasized that mentoring often occurred through personal relationships marked by trust, encouragement, shared ministry experiences, and Scripture-centered conversations. Instead of relying chiefly on structured programs, these pastors described investing in emerging leaders through conversation, prayer, reflection on ministry experiences, and opportunities for increasing leadership responsibility.

Several themes emerged across the interviews. Pastors described mentoring relationships as fundamentally relational, often developing through personal connection,

friendship, and shared ministry experiences. They also emphasized that leadership development begins with the spiritual life and character formation of emerging leaders. In addition, mentoring often occurs through reflective conversations following ministry experiences and through opportunities for emerging leaders to assume meaningful leadership responsibilities. Pastors further observed that mentoring relationships contributed to long-term spiritual growth, increased leadership confidence, and the multiplication of leadership as those who were mentored began investing in others in the life of the church.

Although the participants did not explicitly reference transformational leadership theory when describing their mentoring practices, many of the practices they described reflected themes emphasized in the transformational leadership literature such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.[206] Bass and Riggio's description of these four dimensions remains a useful interpretive lens for the findings in this study, especially because the participants repeatedly described modeling, encouragement, reflection, and individualized attention as normal features of pastoral mentoring.

These findings provide a foundation for comparing the experiences described by the pastors in this study with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 on biblical and Reformed theological foundations for pastoral mentoring, transformational leadership theory, mentoring theory, and leadership development in the local church.

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[206] Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2006), 5-7.

Discussion of Findings

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Leadership Development

The first major finding of this study is that the pastors interviewed understood leadership development as a spiritual and theological work before they understood it as an organizational task. This finding aligns closely with Chapter 2, which presents pastoral mentoring as a transformational ministry shaped by Scripture, discipleship, redemptive history, and the work of the Holy Spirit. That literature does not treat leadership development in the church merely as the transfer of ministry skills. It presents it as the shaping of people through discipleship, spiritual formation, and faithful participation in the life of the church.[207]

The same theological emphasis came through clearly in the interview findings. The pastors repeatedly described mentoring as a work that attends to spiritual health, character, prayer, Scripture, humility, and the inner life of the leader. Even when they spoke about practical ministry responsibilities, they consistently situated those responsibilities in the larger work of spiritual formation. The interviews show a shared conviction that leadership development cannot be separated from discipleship. The pastors in this study understood leadership development as an important expression of discipleship in the life of the church.

This pattern matters because it shows that pastoral mentoring in these settings is grounded not simply in leadership technique, but in theological conviction. The pastors described leadership growth as something that unfolds through walking alongside people,

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[207] Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 42.

helping them reflect on ministry experiences, and encouraging them toward greater maturity in Christ. Their responses make clear that leadership development is not separated from discipleship but grows out of it.

The findings further resonate with the redemptive-historical framework discussed by Vos in *Biblical Theology*.[208] The pastors described mentoring with a patience that assumed leadership develops over time, not all at once. They did not speak as if leaders could be formed quickly through a short curriculum or a limited set of competencies. Instead, they described a slower process of discernment, observation, responsibility, correction, and encouragement. Their responses suggest that leadership development in the church ordinarily unfolds over time and in dependence on God's ongoing work.

Baxter's emphasis on the pastor's need to watch both his own life and the lives of those under his care also sheds light on this pattern.[209] That same concern appears repeatedly in the findings. The pastors spoke about mentoring in ways that assumed spiritually unhealthy leadership will eventually harm both the leader and the church. For that reason, they consistently prioritized prayer, holiness, teachability, and self-awareness as essential to the mentoring of emerging leaders. Their responses suggest that leadership development is not simply preparation for ministry tasks, but preparation for spiritually responsible oversight.

The pastors in this study repeatedly describe leadership growth as taking place through shared ministry, relational proximity, and modeled faithfulness. Their accounts

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[208] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 5.

[209] Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor: Updated and Abridged*, ed. Tim Cooper (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 18, 23.

suggest that emerging leaders learn not only from what the pastors say, but also from how pastors pray, respond to people, handle conflict, interpret ministry situations, and persevere through the ordinary burdens of pastoral life. Wilkins's description of discipleship as a personal relationship between teacher and learner helps clarify this pattern,[210] and the same principle is reflected in Paul's exhortation, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Leadership development in the church, then, is inseparable from embodied example.

One of the clearest implications of this finding is that the theological basis of leadership development must remain explicit in pastoral practice. When churches treat leadership development as recruitment, delegation, or organizational succession, they may produce capable volunteers without adequately forming mature leaders. The pastors in this study described something deeper. They spoke of leadership development as a ministry of spiritual investment that seeks to shape character, discern calling, and cultivate faithfulness over time. Their responses consistently placed mentoring in the larger work of discipleship, shepherding, and spiritual growth, reminding the church that leadership development is not merely about filling roles, but about forming people who can serve Christ and his church with humility, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.

Biblical and theological convictions stand at the heart of leadership development in the local church. The pastors interviewed in this study practiced mentoring in ways that reflected a vision of transformation rooted in Scripture, Reformed pastoral theology, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. For that reason, these findings do more than restate

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[210] Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Wipf and Stock, 2015), 12, 20-21, 23.

themes developed in Chapter 2. They show that the theological foundations of leadership development continue to shape pastoral practice in faithful and practical ways in the life of the church. This theological vision is worked out through mentoring relationships marked by personal presence, trust, and shared ministry.

Mentoring as a Relational Process

A second major finding of this study is that pastors understood mentoring primarily as a relational process of discipleship rather than as a formal leadership program. The mentoring sources examined in Chapter 2 support that pattern by presenting mentoring as a developmental relationship marked by regular interaction, encouragement, and personal investment. Kram, Ragins, and other mentoring scholars argue that mentoring involves far more than the transfer of information; it is a relational context in which growth takes place across multiple dimensions of life and ministry.[211] That broader emphasis on relationship also appeared clearly in the interview findings, where pastors consistently described leadership development as emerging through shared life, steady presence, and ongoing investment over time.

Pastors in this study repeatedly described mentoring as growing through ordinary relationships rather than formal assignments alone. Their accounts pointed to friendship, shared ministry, regular conversation, and ongoing availability as central to the mentoring process. Repeatedly, the most meaningful moments of leadership development

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[211] Kathy E. Kram, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 22; Belle Rose Ragins and Kathy E. Kram, "Roots and Meaning of Mentoring," in *Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research, and Practice*, ed. Belle Rose Ragins and Kathy E. Kram (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 5.

seemed to arise in the normal rhythms of ministry rather than in highly structured settings. In these pastoral contexts, leaders were formed not through programs, but through presence, availability, and steady personal investment.

That emphasis matters because it protects mentoring from being reduced to occasional advice-giving. The interviews in this study suggest that pastoral mentoring usually involves sustained attention to the person rather than isolated guidance about a single problem. Emerging leaders were helped not only by receiving answers, but also by being known, encouraged, corrected, and drawn into the real work of ministry. This pattern is consistent with the mentoring theory articulated by Allen et al. and Eby et al., where developmental relationships were shown to foster both personal support and growing competence.[212]

The findings also distinguish relational mentoring from mere informality. As Chapter 2 showed, mentoring can become so loosely defined that it loses its formative direction. Seversen's warning against discipleship, which is relationally warm but missionally thin, is especially helpful at this point.[213] The pastors in this study did not describe mentoring as mere companionship. Their relationships had purpose. They sought to help emerging leaders grow in maturity, assume responsibility, reflect theologically on ministry, and move toward faithful service in the church. In that sense, the interviews

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[212] Tammy D. Allen et al., "Career Benefits Associated with Protégés: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2004): 128; Lillian T. Eby et al., "An Interdisciplinary Meta-Analysis of the Potential Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences of Protégé Perceptions of Mentoring," *Psychological Bulletin* 139, no. 2 (2013): 443.

[213] Mark Seversen, "Beyond Coffeeshop Discipleship: The Significance of Mission in Spiritual Formation," *Covenant Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2021): 80-83.

supported a strong view of relational mentoring rather than an unstructured or sentimental one.

Another significant feature of this finding is that the pastors described mentoring as involving both encouragement and accountability. Repeatedly, mentoring conversations were described as places where emerging leaders were affirmed, but also lovingly challenged. Pastors encouraged leaders to take next steps, reflect honestly on weaknesses, and receive counsel related to both character and ministry practice. This pattern fits the mentoring literature's portrayal of developmental relationships as requiring both trust and accountability.[214] Healthy mentoring does not avoid difficulty. It creates enough trust for honest and necessary conversations to take place.

The study also suggests that relational discipleship is especially suited to leadership development in the local church because the church is already a relational community. Keller, Tripp, and Coleman each emphasize that leadership formation in Christian settings must be shaped by the theological and relational life of the church rather than borrowed wholesale from secular organizational models.[215] The findings in this study confirm that point. While some insights from the broader mentoring literature remain helpful, the pastors in this study consistently located mentoring in prayer, Scripture, ministry service, and the shared life of the congregation. Their accounts

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[214] David Clutterbuck, *Everyone Needs a Mentor* 5th ed. (London: CIPD, 2014), 7, 99-100; Lillian T. Eby and Melissa M. Robertson, "The Psychology of Workplace Mentoring Relationships," *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organization Behavior* 7 (2020): 89.

[215] Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 346; Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 122; Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of* Evangelism (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 33.

suggest that mentoring is best understood not as a borrowed management technique but as a pastoral expression of disciple-making through which leaders are formed.

This pattern is strengthened by the fact that pastors consistently described mentoring as requiring careful attention to each emerging leader. The interviews showed sensitivity to each leader's pace, experience, confidence, gifts, and current needs. Some emerging leaders needed encouragement, others needed clarity, and still others needed opportunities to act. This individualized attentiveness reflects Kram's emphasis on mentoring as a developmental relationship that requires trust, adaptation, and sensitivity to changing phases of growth.[216]

The interviews and the literature suggest that mentoring in these pastoral contexts functioned as relational discipleship with leadership intent. The relationships were personal, spiritually grounded, and developmentally purposeful. This conclusion not only supports the mentoring literature reviewed earlier but also helps sharpen it by showing how mentoring takes on distinctively pastoral features when practiced in the life of the local church. This emphasis on relational discipleship leads naturally to the next finding: pastors fostered leadership growth through shared ministry and practical responsibility.

Leadership Development in the Life of the Local Church

A third major finding of this study is that leadership development occurred in and through the life of the local church rather than apart from it. Keller, Tripp, and Coleman emphasize that the local church is not merely the setting in which leaders are later

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[216] Kram, *Mentoring at Work*, 48-52.

deployed; it is the primary environment in which they are formed.[217] These writers portray Christian leadership development as being shaped in the ordinary practices, relationships, responsibilities, and worship life of the church. The interview findings align strongly with that conclusion.

The pastors in this study did not describe leadership development as something primarily classroom-based or detached from ministry participation. Instead, emerging leaders were formed through serving, observing, practicing, reflecting, and gradually taking on meaningful responsibility. Chapter 4 consistently showed that leadership growth happened in the context of ministry rather than apart from it. The findings confirm that the ordinary life and ministry of the church provide the setting in which leaders are shaped.

This point is especially important because it highlights the transformative power of actual ministry experience. Day's distinction between leader development and leadership development helps clarify what is taking place here.[218] The pastors in this study were not merely transferring information to individuals; they helped emerging leaders grow in judgment, responsibility, self-awareness, and ministry competence in the shared life of the church. Leader development emerges through practice, reflection, and relational feedback rather than through instruction alone.

Further, the findings suggest that opportunities for meaningful responsibility are not an optional supplement to mentoring, but one of the primary ways leaders are formed.

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[217] Keller, *Center Church*, 46-48; Tripp, *Instruments Redeemer's Hands*, 21-23; Coleman, *Master Plan Evangelism*, 30-33.

[218] David V. Day, "Leadership Development: A Review in Context," *The Leadership Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2000): 605.

Participants repeatedly described inviting emerging leaders into ministry situations where they could serve, exercise judgment, and learn from the experience. These opportunities were usually accompanied by guidance and debriefing rather than mere delegation. This pattern is significant because it shows that leadership development in the local church requires both access and interpretation: leaders need opportunities to act, and they need wise mentors who help them understand what those experiences reveal.

This conclusion also aligns with Coleman's emphasis on Jesus' method of forming leaders through close association, gradual participation, and eventual entrusting.[219] The pastors interviewed in this study did not describe leadership development as instant empowerment without oversight. Instead, they described a process in which emerging leaders were entrusted with responsibility gradually and with support. Such an approach reflects patience, realism, and pastoral care, while also creating space for genuine growth in ministry readiness.

Another implication of this finding is that churches should resist separating leadership development from the broader discipleship culture of the congregation. The interviews showed that mentoring flourished where pastors were already cultivating relationships, spiritual conversations, and shared service. Leadership development appeared less as an isolated track and more as a focused expression of the congregation's larger culture of discipleship. For that reason, the local church matters deeply to this study. The church is not simply the beneficiary of leadership development; it is also a primary means by which that development occurs.

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[219] Coleman, *Master Plan Evangelism*, 30-33.

The interview findings also indicate that leadership development in the local church has a multiplying dimension. As emerging leaders matured, gained confidence, and assumed responsibility, they often began investing in others. Chapter 4 presented this not merely as a pleasant byproduct, but as a meaningful outcome of mentoring. Leadership development in the church extends beyond preparing isolated individuals. It contributes to the formation of a church culture in which responsibility, faithfulness, and spiritual influence are passed from one leader to another.

Together, the interviews and the literature confirm that leadership development is most fruitful when it remains rooted in the actual life, mission, and relationships of the local church. The literature presented this claim both theologically and practically, and the interview findings demonstrate that pastors continue to experience this as a ministry reality. Emerging leaders are formed where ministry is shared, responsibility is entrusted, and faithfulness is practiced in the community of God's people. This emphasis on formation in the life of the church leads naturally to the next finding, which considers the pastoral practices described by participants in relation to transformational leadership mentoring.

Transformational Leadership Mentoring and Pastoral Practice

A fourth major finding of this study is that transformational leadership theory provides a useful interpretive lens for pastoral mentoring even when pastors do not explicitly use that terminology. Bass and Riggio identify four central dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual

stimulation, and individualized consideration.[220] Although the participants in this study did not describe their mentoring practices with these formal categories, their accounts frequently reflected the same leadership behaviors.

The first area of convergence is idealized influence. Participants regularly described the importance of example, integrity, and modeled faithfulness. Emerging leaders were not formed merely by hearing instruction; they were shaped by watching how pastors oversaw people, exhibited responsibility, and lived out their convictions. This pattern is consistent with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes that influence is often conveyed through character and example.[221] In pastoral settings, this dimension carries particular significance because leadership credibility is inseparable from spiritual and moral integrity.

A further point of overlap appears in inspirational motivation. The findings of Chapter 4 showed that pastors often encouraged emerging leaders to step forward, recognize their gifts, and see how their lives could be used in service to Christ and the church. Rather than merely filling ministry roles, these pastors helped people imagine a more faithful and fruitful future. This pattern is consistent with transformational leadership's emphasis on articulating purpose and cultivating commitment.[222] In ministry contexts, however, that motivation was usually framed theologically rather than organizationally. The pastors' encouragement was tied to calling, service, growth, and the mission of the church rather than to institutional performance alone.

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[220] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5-7.

[221] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 5.

[222] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 6.

Another dimension that emerged clearly in the interviews was intellectual stimulation. The pastors repeatedly helped emerging leaders reflect on ministry experiences, think biblically and theologically, and interpret what God might be teaching them through success, challenge, or uncertainty. Such mentoring did not simply provide answers, but invited reflection, discernment, and self-examination. Bass and Riggio help clarify this dynamic by describing intellectual stimulation as the work of helping followers think differently, question assumptions, and engage problems more thoughtfully.[223] In this study, those processes were often shaped by Scripture, prayer, and pastoral wisdom.

The clearest point of overlap may be individualized consideration. The pastors consistently described mentoring relationships that were personal and adaptive. They paid attention to the different personalities, maturity levels, gifts, and circumstances of emerging leaders. Bass and Riggio help clarify this dimension by describing individualized consideration as attentive investment in the needs and development of particular people.[224] The findings suggest that pastoral mentoring commonly embodies transformational practices not by adopting the theory directly, but by investing in people in ways that the theory helps explain.

The study suggests important limits to the transformational leadership framework. The pastors in this study anchored leadership development more explicitly in discipleship, spiritual maturity, prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit than transformational leadership literature typically does. For that reason, transformational

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[223] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 7.

[224] Bass and Riggio, *Transformational Leadership*, 6.

leadership theory should not govern the findings too completely. It is better understood as a secondary interpretive lens that illuminates certain relational and developmental dimensions of pastoral mentoring while remaining subject to the biblical and theological foundations set forth earlier.

This qualification is important because it helps to keep transformational leadership theory in its proper place. The interviews did not reveal pastors trying to implement a leadership model imported from organizational theory; instead, they revealed pastors mentoring emerging leaders as shepherds, disciple-makers, and spiritual mentors. Many of their practices involved modeling, encouragement, reflective conversation, and individualized care. For that reason, transformational leadership theory remains a legitimate and useful conversation partner for interpreting what was observed.

These findings point to a clear conclusion. The pastors in this study were not following transformational leadership theory as a mentoring model, yet many of their mentoring practices reflected the very kinds of leadership behaviors that theory helps describe. Therefore, the findings support the broader claim of this dissertation: when kept in its proper place, transformational leadership mentoring provides a useful lens for understanding how pastors foster the spiritual and ministry growth of emerging leaders in the local church.

These conclusions point to practical implications for pastoral ministry. Pastors may benefit from reflecting more intentionally on the transformational dimensions already present in their mentoring. Doing so could strengthen their clarity of vision, provide personal encouragement, help with developmental challenges, and increase individualized care while still grounding those practices firmly in Scripture, Reformed

pastoral theology, and the responsibilities of ministry in the local church. Yet these practices are not finally explained by leadership theory alone, which leads naturally to the next finding on the role of the Holy Spirit in leadership formation.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Leadership Formation

The fifth major finding of this study is that pastors consistently understood leadership formation as dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. While this theme intersects with the first finding on theological foundations, it deserves a separate treatment because of how often it appeared in the interviews and how clearly it shaped the pastoral posture participants described. Chapter 4 repeatedly portrayed mentoring as participation in what God was already doing in the life of the emerging leader. The pastors did not present themselves as the ultimate producers of growth. Instead, they saw themselves as attentive participants in a process directed by God.

This finding aligns with the themes developed in Chapter 2, where Christian formation is not merely behavioral improvement or skills acquisition, but transformation that occurs through God's redemptive work. Tripp's emphasis on heart change and Baxter's concern for spiritual seriousness help clarify this point.[225] The interviews confirm that pastoral mentoring was commonly practiced with this same theological conviction. Growth could be cultivated and encouraged, but it could not be engineered.

The interviews are especially striking in the way they connect spiritual attentiveness with practical mentoring. Participants described praying with leaders, asking how God might be working in and through their experiences, encouraging

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[225] Tripp, *Instruments Redeemer's Hands*, 20-25; Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, 18.

discernment, and helping people take faithful next steps. In other words, dependence on the Spirit did not produce passivity but rather, fostered a kind of pastoral attentiveness marked by prayer, discernment, and steady care.

This pattern is important because it shows that leadership development in the church involves both human responsibility and divine agency. In these pastoral contexts, mentoring was not treated as a relationship between mentor and mentee alone, but as a process conducted in the conscious dependence on the presence and agency of God. The mentors in this study were neither passive observers nor the ones responsible for growth. They functioned more like shepherds who walked closely with emerging leaders while recognizing that the deepest work of conviction, calling, growth, and transformation belongs to God. This posture offers a needed corrective to views of leadership development that place too much weight on human strategy or control.

This emphasis on the Holy Spirit helps explain why prayer and discernment occupied such a principal place in the mentoring practices described in Chapter 4. Prayer was not merely an added devotional practice. It was one of the ways pastors expressed dependence on the Spirit and invited emerging leaders to do the same. In the same way, reflective conversations about ministry, rather than simply evaluative exercises, were often moments of spiritual discernment in which mentors and emerging leaders sought to understand what God was doing through specific experiences.

This finding makes clear that any account of pastoral mentoring that neglects dependence on the Holy Spirit will fail to capture the heart of what the pastors in this study described. Their practices were relational, practical, and developmental, but they were also deeply spiritual. The role of the Holy Spirit was not an occasional theme added

to mentoring language. It was one of the central realities shaping and giving meaning to the entire process of leadership formation.

Summary of Findings

This study presents pastoral mentoring as a relational, spiritually dependent, and church-centered process of leadership formation. Through the interviews, pastors described mentoring not as a formal program detached from ministry, but as a form of discipleship conducted through shared life, meaningful responsibility, personal care, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. The findings also suggest that transformational leadership theory can serve as a helpful interpretive lens, provided it remains secondary to the biblical and theological foundations that frame the study. This chapter has shown that pastors help emerging leaders grow through practices that are practical, relational, theological, and deeply spiritual. Those conclusions now provide the basis for considering how these findings can inform recommendations for pastoral practice.

Recommendations for Practice

Several practical recommendations for pastoral ministry and leadership development in the local church emerge from this study. First, churches should treat leadership development as a spiritual and theological responsibility, not simply an organizational need. The pastors in this study repeatedly pointed to the inner life, character, and spiritual maturity of emerging leaders. The broader theological and mentoring literature supports that same concern by presenting leadership formation as involving the whole person, not ministry competence alone. Churches should build leadership pathways that explicitly prioritize prayer, Scripture, repentance, teachability,

and growth in Christ. Ministry competence is best understood as rooted in spiritual maturity and inward transformation.

Second, pastors should approach mentoring as a relational process that takes place in the ordinary life of ministry. Both the interviews and the mentoring literature point in that direction by highlighting trust, presence, and ongoing investment. Formal programs may still serve a purpose, but the deepest growth often takes place through sustained relationships, shared service, and regular conversation. Churches should cultivate ministry cultures in which pastors and mature leaders are consistently present with emerging leaders, not primarily reliant on periodic training events.

Third, churches should intentionally connect leadership development to real ministry responsibility. Emerging leaders in this study were formed not only through instruction, but through opportunities to serve, exercise judgment, receive feedback, and reflect on experience. The broader discussion of leadership development supports that pattern by showing that growth often takes place through guided participation and increasing responsibility, not observation alone. Churches should entrust ministry opportunities to emergent leaders progressively and pair them with pastoral support, so that potential leaders are not simply identified but formed through faithful practice.

Fourth, pastors should make reflective conversation a normal part of mentoring. The findings of this study showed that emerging leaders often grew as they were helped to process ministry experiences, failures, questions, and successes considering Scripture and pastoral wisdom. This emphasis fits the broader mentoring and leadership development literature, which highlights the importance of reflection, discernment, and guided interpretation in the formation process. Churches should cultivate mentoring

rhythms that include debriefing, theological reflection, prayer, and conversation about character as well as the practical demands of ministry.

Fifth, pastors should recognize the value of individualized attention in leadership development. Emerging leaders do not all grow in the same way or at the same pace. The broader mentoring literature reinforces that point by urging mentors to address each person's needs, readiness, and development instead of using uniform approaches. Different emerging leaders need diverse types of care, such as encouragement, challenge, or clear guidance about their gifts and calling. Churches should avoid one-size-fits-all approaches and tailor development to each emerging leader.

Sixth, churches should intentionally articulate a theological rationale for leadership development. Pastors in this study often framed mentoring through biblical themes of discipleship, shepherding, and spiritual growth, not simply ministry needs. The literature supports that same approach by treating leadership formation in the church as a theological and pastoral responsibility, not just a managerial task. Leadership development should be given clear shape by aligning it with the church's mission, theological commitments, ministry expectations, and pathways of service. That clarity should be explicit in training documents, handbooks, ministry expectations, and staff development. Clear theological language can help keep leadership development grounded in the church's mission and guard it from drifting into purely institutional thinking.

Seventh, pastors should lead with humble dependence on the Holy Spirit. Effective mentoring requires active guidance joined with spiritual attentiveness. The theological framework developed earlier treats leadership formation as something that can be cultivated and encouraged, but never finally produced by human effort alone.

Prayer, discernment, and openness to God's work should be central elements of leadership development rather than optional additions. Churches that preserve this posture are more likely to form leaders who are spiritually grounded and capable.

Finally, churches should expect leadership development to contribute to multiplication, not just immediate ministry staffing. Several pastors observed that those they mentored eventually began investing in others. That pattern shows that leadership formation in the church reaches beyond preparing individuals for roles to cultivate a culture of discipleship and shared responsibility. Churches should evaluate leadership development not only by short-term role placement, but by long-term growth in faithfulness, responsibility, and multiplying influence.

Summary of Recommendations for Practice

These recommendations encourage churches to view leadership development not as a secondary concern, but as a central part of faithful pastoral ministry. Emerging leaders are best formed through relationships, meaningful responsibility, theological clarity, reflective conversation, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. When these commitments are built into the ordinary life of the church, leadership development can move beyond short-term staffing needs toward the long-term formation of faithful and fruitful servants. Several areas for further study emerge from this project.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on pastors serving in Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregations in western Pennsylvania. Future research could explore whether similar patterns appear in other denominations, church traditions, geographic areas, and ministry

contexts. Comparative studies could help determine which findings are more widely transferable and which are especially shaped by a Reformed and Presbyterian setting.

Second, future research could examine the experiences of emerging leaders themselves. This study concentrated on how senior pastors described their mentoring practices and the outcomes they perceived. A complementary study that interviews those who have been mentored could provide valuable insight into the mentoring process, including areas of convergence and divergence between mentor and mentee perceptions.

Third, future research could explore differences between formal and informal mentoring structures within the local church. This study suggests that much meaningful formation occurs informally in the rhythms of ministry. Some churches may benefit from more intentional structures. Additional research could help clarify when formal pathways strengthen leadership development and when they may inhibit the relational depth that mentoring requires.

Fourth, future research could examine transformational leadership mentoring with more participants and additional forms of data collection. Such work could help clarify whether the pastoral practices identified in this dissertation are connected to spiritual growth, ministry confidence, leadership readiness, or multiplication among emerging leaders.

Fifth, research could investigate the relationship between mentoring and pastoral succession, ministry residencies, elder and deacon development, or volunteer leadership pipelines. Because local churches often struggle to identify and prepare future leaders, these areas offer especially promising opportunities for study.

Finally, future research could explore more directly the theological dimensions of dependence on the Holy Spirit in leadership development. This study found that participants consistently described mentoring as spiritually discerned and prayerfully guided, yet this theme remains underdeveloped in much of the leadership literature. Further theological reflection and research could deepen the church's understanding of how spiritual formation, divine agency, and pastoral mentoring relate to one another in the development of leaders.

Summary of Recommendations for Further Research

These recommendations show that the study of pastoral mentoring remains promising, though incomplete. Further work across different denominational settings, ministry contexts, research approaches, and pastoral-theological concerns could deepen the church's understanding of how emerging leaders are formed. Attention to the perspectives of mentees, the role of formal and informal structures, and the work of the Holy Spirit in leadership formation may help strengthen both theological reflection and pastoral practice.

Chapter 5 Summary

This chapter argued that transformational leadership mentoring can serve as a meaningful framework for understanding how pastors help emerging leaders grow spiritually and in ministry through the life of the local church. It has shown that pastors help emerging leaders grow through shared life, meaningful responsibility, reflective conversation, individualized care, and dependence on the Holy Spirit. When considered alongside the literature, these findings support a clear conclusion: Transformational

leadership mentoring can serve as a helpful interpretive framework under biblical and theological convictions. This study contributes not only to academic reflection, but to the church's ongoing task of developing emerging leaders for faithful ministry.

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