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CULTIVATING
MENTORS

SHARING WISDOM IN
CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION



FOREWORD BY Mark R. Schwehn

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INTRODUCTION

A Season of Peril?

TODD C. REAM, JERRY PATTENGALE,
AND CHRISTOPHER J. DEVERS



Until she began her second year of teaching, Marvilla believed the decisions she made concerning her vocation as a Christian scholar and as a person were not only professionally prudent but honoring of her relationship with God. Growing up in a Pentecostal family and church in South Texas, Marvilla was the first in her family and one of the first in her church to go to college. Knowing God had given her considerable intellectual abilities, Marvilla's parents and fellow church members were thrilled when she chose to attend a Christian college, even if it meant she traveled over one thousand miles away from home.

Marvilla flourished while in college as both curricular and cocurricular educators recognized her considerable abilities. As a political science major and Spanish minor, she was asked by professors to work with them on various projects. This gave her the opportunity to give several conference papers and publish a couple of articles, including her senior thesis. Her residence director encouraged her to run for various student government positions, which culminated in her service as student body president her senior year.

Now thirteen hundred miles away from home, Marvilla experienced continued support while in graduate school, where she earned several fellowships, traveled widely in Central and South America to conduct research, and coauthored what became an award-winning book with her

adviser. Those efforts led Marvilla to have the luxury of choosing between several tenure-track positions in political science. Eighteen hundred miles from her family and church in South Texas, Marvilla proudly accepted an offer from a Christian college.

The first year of teaching proved demanding, but Marvilla weathered the transition, believing she was making a positive impact on the students she served. Her course evaluations were high, and she established a research group with several second- and third-year students, developed a study abroad partnership, and, although she admittedly knew little about softball, became the faculty adviser for the college's intercollegiate team.

Despite spending ample time on campus, Marvilla eventually noticed relationships with her colleagues remained somewhat distant. Most of them demonstrated little interest in her research and even less interest in her life as a young, single Latina. Closest to her own age was a colleague who was nine years older than Marvilla. All of her colleagues were also White, married, and spent little to no time on research. When a prominent university press published her dissertation as a book, none of her colleagues took notice. When that same publisher offered her a contract for a second book, some of her colleagues began exhibiting passive-aggressive forms of hostility. Despite evidence to the contrary offered by Marvilla's teaching evaluations, questions began circulating as to whether Marvilla's commitment to research meant she was not committed to teaching.

Seeking to make sense of the mounting vocational and personal disorientation she was feeling, Marvilla decided to seek a mentor's wisdom. When looking for a mentor, however, she could not find someone who shared her passions for teaching, research, and service. Compounding the challenge, she could not find someone who shared in her life story as a young, single Latina. Marvilla's vocational disorientation would only grow with each passive-aggressive comment. Lacking a mentor's insights, Marvilla failed to determine that the reason for those comments was mounting professional jealousy. As she waded into her second year of teaching, Marvilla began to wonder if she had made a mistake. She wondered if not only her identity as a Christian scholar but also her value as a person created in God's image was in peril.

MENTORING, GENERATIONAL TRANSITION, AND THE ACADEMIC VOCATION

Framed by insights from the Christian theological tradition, this volume explores ideas about and approaches to the practice of mentoring, asking what that tradition has to offer scholars such as Marvella. In particular, the volume responds to the needs of younger generations (e.g., Millennials and Gen Z) as they enter the academic workforce. It considers how traditional Christian ideas around academic vocation and theologically informed practices of mentoring can be used to support those educators.

As a whole, this distinguished group of contributors explores the practice of mentoring from the past, drawing on traditional, theological understandings of the mentee-mentor relationship to consider what goals should define mentoring relationships in the future and what practices make the cultivation of those relationships possible. This volume thereby offers important theoretical insights and practical recommendations for scholars, faculty members, student affairs professionals, and policy makers.

In order to do so, this volume builds on three commonly accepted notions: (1) younger generations present specific and previously unseen needs and characteristics as they enter higher education; (2) these individuals may well benefit from mentorship, which, as yet, remains fairly ill-defined in relation to concrete applications; and (3) the Christian tradition embraces ideas of mentorship within the academic vocation. As such, the volume explores traditionally theological approaches to the practice of mentoring to consider how far they might be applied effectively to support young people in Christian, as well as other secular institutions in higher education.

To those ends, this volume includes explorations of the characteristics and needs of younger generations including Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) and Gen Z (born between 1995 and 2015). Qualities represented by members of these generations are often perceived as sources of friction in the workplace. For example, in the February 19, 2020, edition of the *New York Times*, Jasmine Hughes offered “Need to Keep Gen Z Workers Happy? Hire a ‘Generational Consultant.’”

Many sociologists point to a heightened need to raise such questions with members of these younger generations. For example, David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group and contributor to this volume, noted in relation to his study of Millennials and the church titled *You Lost Me*, that “the next generation’s prodigious use of technology, entertainment, and media” is historically significant.¹ In particular, such forms and rates of usage disconnect them from members of previous generations and, in turn, influence how well members of younger generations inherit those roles. Kinnaman suggests mentoring practices focused on the cultivation of vocational awareness and wisdom as ways to address that challenge.

Regardless of what one thinks of Millennials and members of Gen Z, they are gradually taking on roles and entering the workforce in positions formerly held by members of the Baby Boomer generation. The Millennial generation alone, for example, now makes up approximately half of the workforce in the United States. Resisting the changes represented by Millennials and members of Gen Z is not only pragmatically misguided, but also precludes an appreciation of positive qualities that Millennials and members of Gen Z may be introducing to the workforce. For example, in the September 17, 2019, issue of the *New York Times*, Claire Cain Miller and Sanam Yar proposed, “Could they [Millennials], instead, be among the first to understand the proper role of work in life—and end up re-making work for everyone else?”²

This volume pays particular attention to the potential role of these generations in the academic workforce. A central argument of the volume is that instead of demeaning or resisting the changes in expectations members of younger generations represent, colleges and universities would be well served by engaging these changes. As Miller and Yar propose, a greater awareness of the relationship shared by work and life can be utilized as a means of helping colleges and universities fulfill their missions at higher levels than members of previous generations had envisioned. A

¹David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 41.

²Claire Cain Miller and Sanam Yar, “Young People Are Going to Save Us All from Office Life,” *New York Times*, September 17, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/09/17/style/generation-z-millennials-work-life-balance.html.

second core argument is that mentorship is critical to cultivating what the younger generation can offer as educators.

In support of this assertion, this volume explores ways of supporting members of these generations by developing theologically informed and effective approaches to the practice of mentoring. College admissions materials, for example, are littered with images of faculty providing students with advice over coffee and working side by side on research. New colleagues are often recruited with the promise of access to wisdom offered by accomplished colleagues. Regardless, definitions of mentoring, as well as concrete organizational commitments to good mentoring, are nearly non-existent.

Perhaps for the very reason that the value of mentoring is perceived to be self-evident, scholars, regardless of discipline, pay little attention to debating the goals of mentoring, what practices allow for the achievement of those goals, and what challenges may emerge when those goals are not rightfully defined and honored. For example, the results of a poll conducted by Gallup and released on January 24, 2019, demonstrated the link between student well-being and support from faculty. However, the summary of the results of that poll suggested, “supportive relationships with professors and mentors are significantly more common in certain fields of study—including arts and humanities—than others.”³ One challenge lurking within the details is that the goal of mentoring went undefined and, as a result, the practices allowing that goal to be achieved went unnamed.

Ubiquitous perceptions of the value of mentoring are arguably even more pervasive on evangelical university campuses than on other campuses. The Christian commitment to hospitality, naming only one such commitment, fosters environments where the benefits of practices such as mentoring are assumed. The goals and attendant mentoring practices on those campuses, however, are subject to little to no critical reflection. The unquestioned nature of those assumptions raises the possibility that some mentoring practices may even be more harmful than beneficial.

³Steve Crabtree, “Student Support from Faculty, Mentors Varies by Major,” Gallup, January 24, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/246017/student-support-faculty-mentors-varies-major.aspx>.

This volume thus argues the Christian theological tradition offers a wealth of knowledge and experience in relation to mentorship. Such critical reflection may usefully inform new and effective approaches to support Millennials and members of Gen Z through effective mentor-mentee relationships. As a result, exploring those practices in this sector of higher education may yield best practices that may prove applicable to higher education more broadly. To that end, this volume:

1. considers the characteristics of younger generations in the context of mentoring,
2. explores what the Christian tradition offers in terms of mentorship and academic vocation, and
3. demonstrates how these ideas might inform mentorship of members of younger generations in broader scholarly contexts.

MENTORING, GENERATIONAL TRANSITION, AND THE ACADEMIC VOCATION

While many books exist concerning members of younger generations and mentoring, and a few even exist concerning the academic vocation, no book considers the three of them and the relationship they share. This book does so, and does so in a way, again, that frames that relationship by drawing on the riches of the Christian theological tradition. What follows then is an overview of key resources utilized in the development of the argument defining this book, many of which were generated by contributors to this book.

First, many of the books related to members of younger generations amount to manuals for members of other generations seeking to manage them—for example, please see Chris Tuff's *The Millennial Whisperer* (Morgan James, 2019) and Bruce Tulgan's *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy* (Jossey-Bass, 2016). In terms of members of younger generations and insights about their spiritual lives, the work done by Tim Clydesdale (as evidenced by his recent *The Twentysomething Soul: Understanding the Religious and Secular Lives of American Young Adults*, Oxford University Press, 2019) proved to be beneficial to defining the commitments shaping this project. Fortunately, he is also a contributor to this volume.

In addition, David Kinnaman has focused his attention for years on the spiritual lives of younger generations, publishing works such as *Faith for Exiles: 5 Ways for a New Generation to Follow Jesus in Digital Babylon* (Baker Books, 2019), *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme* (Baker Books, 2016), *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church . . . and Rethinking Faith* (Baker Books, 2011), and *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Baker Books, 2007).

For almost twenty years, Christian Smith has traced the spiritual lives of members of younger generations as they passed from being teenagers to emerging adults. While his *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University Press, 2005) proved helpful, his *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford University Press, 2009), and *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (Oxford University Press, 2011) proved beneficial to defining the commitments shaping this project.

As evident in the chapters that follow, how generations are defined and, in particular, the value those definitions offer is still a matter for debate. Some scholars place considerable value on the characteristics represented by various generations. Others are less confident. One summary of some of those debates and differences is found in Bobby Duffy's *The Generation Myth: Why When You're Born Matters Less than You Think* (Basic Books, 2021).

Regardless of one's views of such debates, oversimplifications can result in situations that fail to develop practices supporting members of these generations while also acknowledging their changed perceptions, strengths, and existence in a much-changed world. Such oversimplifications, and the challenges that follow, are not always limited to being projected on members of younger generations. Helen Andrews's *Boomers: The Men and Women Who Promised Freedom and Delivered Disaster* (Sentinel, 2021) is a prime example of the challenges that form of generational oversimplification, albeit in the reverse order often exercised, can offer.

While a seemingly endless number of volumes exist concerning mentoring, very few are based on theological reflection or empirical assessment.

As previously indicated, many titles present mentoring as an unquestioned good and then move quickly to offering tips or strategies. Resources that begin to point beyond those books, however, are Tammy D. Allen and Lillian T. Eby's (eds.) *Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) and Jean E. Rhodes's *Older and Wiser: New Ideas for Youth Mentoring in the 21st Century* (Harvard University Press, 2020).

When one looks for works on the mentoring of collegiate educators, only a handful emerges, including David Kiel's *Developing Faculty Mentoring Programs: A Comprehensive Handbook* (Academic Impressions, 2019); Susan L. Phillips and Milton D. Cox's *Faculty Mentoring: A Practical Manual for Mentors, Mentees, Administrators, and Faculty Developers* (Stylus, 2015); Peter Felton, H. Dirksen L. Bauman, Aaron Kheriaty, and Edward Taylor's (eds.) *Transformative Conversations: A Guide to Mentoring Communities Among Colleagues in Higher Education* (Jossey-Bass, 2013); Dwayne Mack, Elwood D. Watson, and Michelle Madsen Camacho's (eds.) *Mentoring Faculty of Color: Essays on Professional Development and Advancement in Colleges and Universities* (McFarland & Company, 2012); and Carole J. Bland, Anne L. Taylor, S. Lynn Shollen, Anne Marie Weber-Main, and Patricia A. Mulcahy's *Faculty Success Through Mentoring: A Guide for Mentors, Mentees, and Leaders* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

While only one chapter in Michael G. Strawser's (ed.) *Leading Millennial Faculty: Navigating the New Professoriate* (Lexington, 2019) focuses directly on mentoring, that chapter, as well as several other related chapters, also proved beneficial to defining the commitments shaping this project. Caroline J. Simon's edited volume *Mentoring for Mission: Nurturing New Faculty at Church-Related Colleges* (Eerdmans, 2003) provided optimism that a theology of mentoring was applicable to cultivating an appreciation for the Christian academic vocation.

The literature base that is probably the most lacking but is just as foundational to this project is that which explores the academic vocation. Countless descriptive studies focus on collegiate educators but only a few focus on the theological contours that define what it means to be called to such a profession. The most notable work and the one that greatly

shaped this project is Mark R. Schwehn's *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation* (Oxford University Press, 1999). A more recent volume that demonstrates considerable promise for understanding the academic vocation is Shaun C. Henson and Michael J. Lakey's *Academic Vocation in the Church and Academy Today: 'And with All of Your Mind'* (Routledge, 2016).

VOLUME OVERVIEW

In order to grapple with how the practice of mentoring can deepen an appreciation for the academic vocation during seasons of generational transition, this volume includes contributions from distinguished scholars who graciously offer their scholarly insights and programmatic advice.

Chapter one, "The Need to Rediscover: Mentoring as a Crucial Formation Practice," David Kinnaman: A critical component to understanding members of younger generations is coming to terms with how they are theologically oriented. As some scholars note, "Nones" have no formal religious commitments. For the majority, however, their comparatively diverse theological convictions are not only critical to how they understand themselves, but also to how they orient their lives as a whole. In contrast, Baby Boomers were often viewed as having more homogeneous theological convictions, but many also viewed those commitments as best defining their private lives. For younger individuals with or without theological commitments, little to no disjunction between public and private exists. Mentorship enables individuals to explore how faith and learning relate to one another and indicates how that relationship can serve educators as they progress in their careers.

Chapter two, "Leading Integrated Lives: Navigating Personal and Professional Commitments Through Mentorship," Tim Clydesdale: The forces that led to the rise of the phase in life now known as emerging adulthood (cost of living, length of time in school, delayed time to marriage and childbearing, etc.) contributed to the appreciation members of younger generations now have for the practice of mentoring. The mentoring they appreciate is not simply focused on what jobs they choose, but processing what theological commitments or values led them to pursue such

professional roles. However, mentoring need not conclude once individuals decide to serve as collegiate educators and begin careers. Mentorship theologically resources educators striving to understand the relationship between their personal and professional lives and then how to navigate that relationship if it changes over the course of their lives.

Chapter three, “Call and Response: Mentoring for Organizational Fit and Flourishing,” Margaret Diddams: While members of younger generations are more suspicious of organizations or institutions than members of previous generations, they often value community at a higher level. If prepared well, the values they hold have the potential to re-shape institutions, in general, and colleges and universities, in particular, in ways that will allow those institutions to fulfill their missions in ways previous generations were theologically not capable of envisioning. In the meantime, the transition in how members of different generations understand the institutions they inhabit may come with challenges. Collegiate educators need to be prepared to face those challenges, understand why they are occurring, and, whenever possible, theologically view them as opportunities for growth. Mentorship theologically resources young educators coming to terms with how they think about organizations, as well as what assumptions they employ when thinking about what it means to be individuals who exist in larger organizational and institutional contexts.

Chapter four, “Diversity and Community: Mentoring Toward a New We,” Edgardo Colón-Emeric: One dynamic reshaping almost all institutions is growing ethnic diversity. Members of younger generations are not only more ethnically diverse than members of previous generations, but they also tend to place a greater value on ethnic diversity. While commendable, calls for diversity provoke both opposition as well as support in a culture presently defined by social and political polarization. In order to fulfill a theologically rooted understanding of diversity, what then do collegiate educators need to do to create environments that not only tolerate difference, but welcome and appreciate it? Answers to that question will prove critical to ways institutions will not only change but hopefully also evolve. Building on this exploration, mentorship aids individuals in processing what theological commitments they possess concerning ethnic

diversity as well as how those commitments come together within organizational and institutional contexts.

Chapter five, “Boomers and Zoomers: Mentoring Toward Human-Centeredness in Our Work,” Rebecca C. Hong: Members of younger generations are the first to live as digital natives or individuals for whom cell phones and social media platforms existed for the majority of their lives. Their practices and habits of communication are different from members of previous generations, as well as their expectations concerning where, when, and how they work. On one level, they do not view work as something done at a particular place, at a particular time, and in a particular way. On another level, they desire greater flexibility in terms of where, when, and how work is completed. Exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, such shifts have ramifications not only for the completion of work but also for the fabric of institutions that work is intended to advance. Educators populating different generations will need to understand those changes and at least initially view them as theologically informed opportunities for work to be completed at higher levels even if that work is being done at different times, in different places, and perhaps even in different ways. Mentorship draws on theological ideas concerning to what end we work and, in turn, informs where, when, and how we work.

Chapter six, “Intentional Influence: Relevant Practices and Habits We Must Cultivate in Today’s Emerging Generation,” Tim Elmore: Ultimately, organizations are collections of cultural expectations shaped by virtue of the participation of community members in common practices that eventually come to fruition in habits. Regardless of what commonalities they share, part of what makes universities different is the habits that respectively define them. Despite their commonalities, no two university communities are ever defined by the exact same habits. However, how often do community members take time to think theologically about the expectations that define their institutions, along with the practices and habits that make those expectations possible? Perhaps one point in time when those expectations become evident is when members of a subsequent generation begin accepting positions within the community. Instead of generational transition being a time when friction surfaces over those expectations,

what would it mean for educators to participate in collaborative and ongoing processes that would allow them to think theologically about those expectations? In response to this question, colleges and universities might adopt theologically informed mentorship. Doing so would encourage collaborative reflection between younger and older educators as they consider the historical expectations that define their institutions, and then perhaps inform how those expectations are refined, rejected, and/or reimaged.

Chapter seven, “Who Will Lead Us: A Lifecycle Approach to Academic Mentorship,” Beck A. Taylor: At the present time, Millennials and members of Gen Z are growing in number in ranks such as residence directors, academic advisers, assistant coaches, and assistant professors. In the near future, those same colleagues will begin populating positions such as directors of residence life, head coaches, department chairs, and full professors. Eventually, they will serve as chief academic affairs officers, chief student affairs officers, and presidents. Instead of simply mentoring members of those generations to serve well in those entry-level roles as educators, what would it mean to mentor them to one day serve well when they are senior administrators? What theological lessons, then, prepare them to lead well now *and* in the future? A process of addressing those questions does not begin when individuals assume senior-level positions but years earlier, shortly after they arrive on campus and take entry-level ones. Mentorship theologically resources younger educators to engage with the prospect of leadership, the qualities leadership requires, and the question of how they can nurture and strengthen those qualities within themselves and others.

Conclusion, “A Season of Promise,” Stacy Hammons: Drawing from the material proposed in the introduction and the seven chapters that followed it, the conclusion focuses on a summation of what was offered and then translates those details into propositions educators will need to consider. Doing so then allows the future to be viewed as one defined by the promise it offers. As members of younger generations continue to take their place as collegiate educators and, in time, as athletic directors, chief academic affairs officers, chief student affairs officers, and presidents, universities may be poised to fulfill their missions at levels higher than

members of previous generations envisioned. Mentorship theologically resources individuals attempting to align the potential of those expectations at the highest possible levels.

FROM PERIL TO PROMISE

Although she did not want to leave the college where she began her teaching career, Marvilla eventually came to believe she had no other choice. As successes with her students and in her field mounted, so did the passive aggressive comments from her colleagues. No longer able to mask her professional jealousy, one of Marvilla's colleagues, her department chair, began lashing out at her. Those experiences became so unfortunate that Marvilla started insisting they only meet in public spaces such as the coffee counter in the student center. Marvilla eventually accepted an offer from another college due to mounting fears that even her promotion to associate professor was in question.

Moving is never easy. In Marvilla's case, however, the sacrifice proved worthwhile. Marvilla's new colleagues honored her work. Team-taught courses, coauthored papers and books, co-led study abroad programs, and departmental coffee hours defined the culture Marvilla came to share with her new colleagues. When the softball team needed a new faculty adviser, Marvilla was also eager to serve. Just as important in Marvilla's success was a mentor who sought her out shortly after her arrival.

That mentor, a prominent faculty member in economics, helped Marvilla navigate the institutional politics, set a long-term research agenda, find a church, and connect with a leadership succession program for young women. Although now two thousand miles away from her home in South Texas, Marvilla found a community that valued her promise as a Christian scholar and as a person created in God's image.

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