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Developing Intentional Ecclesiastical Mentors for Women in Ministry  
“Encouraging and Strengthening Others”

By

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Doctor of Ministry

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## **Abstract**

Developing Intentional Ecclesiastical Mentors for Women in Ministry  
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Many clergywomen have devoted years of their lives to practical, theological and other professional training only to find themselves figuratively sitting in ministerial dugouts waiting for their names to be called or in outfields where few balls travel. A biblically based, “grassroots” type of intentional ecclesiastical mentoring program could help polish these women for more active and meaningful service. It is important that clergywomen affirm their likeness in God’s image by living out their God-given gifts and by protecting and memorializing women’s accomplishments and positive biblical stories for the sake of all clergy and laity. Because God presented a “themness” (male and female) intent, the integrity of God’s story is not holistically interpreted without the conjoined perspective of women’s voices, interpretations, and contributions. Patriarchal and androcentric biblical commentators and leaders have often been silent, oblivious, or dismissive of the scriptural narratives which display strong female-centered leadership and mentorship as judge, scholars, builders, prophetesses, benefactors, mothers, single women, wives ruling beside the patriarchs, and other leaders.

An ecclesiastical mentoring program can help clergywomen recognize their own strengths by identifying with the plights of the many strong, godly women in scripture. Consequently, this kind of mentorship will help motivate them for stronger and upward mobility, expanded ministry and community building, and by imparting confident leadership. While standard business mentoring models may provide some useful mentoring techniques, they should not be used exclusively to meet the needs of clergywomen because business models are not grounded in biblical interpretation and proclamation of the Holy Scriptures. Developing intentional ecclesiastical mentors for women in ministry will strengthen and encourage women to support each other with a spirit of camaraderie for ministerial advancement while working cooperatively with their male colleagues. Successful results will strengthen the entire church body.

Developing Intentional Ecclesiastical Mentors for Women in Ministry  
“Encouraging and Strengthening Others”

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## 1. Introduction

There is a scarcity of seasoned and accomplished female clergy within the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) who intentionally mentor others, especially female ministers, in a formal program. According to Gordon F. Shea, “mentoring is the fundamental form of human development where one person invests time, energy and personal know-how in assisting the growth and ability of another person.”<sup>1</sup> The practice has been used successfully in business, government, and education, and is evident in the Old and New Testaments as a way to ensure succession, advancement, leadership, and the holistic embrace of faith. So, it appears that locally established AME Women in Ministry groups could also benefit from employing their primary professional resource—namely, the Holy Scriptures, to mentor women for leadership as ministers, pastors, presiding elders, component leaders, and bishops in the Church.<sup>2</sup>

Many women clergy have devoted years of their lives to theological and other professional training only to find themselves figuratively sitting in ministerial dugouts waiting for their names to be called or in outfields where few balls travel. A biblically based, “grassroots” type of intentional mentoring program could help polish these women for stronger and upward mobility, expanded ministry and community building, and by imparting confident leadership. Most have received their calling before entering seminaries and theology schools, having few female role models. They have accepted the person who was pastoring the church

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon F. Shea, *Mentoring: How to Develop Successful Mentor Behaviors*, 3rd ed. (Seattle: Crisp Publications, Incorporated, 2001), 3.

<sup>2</sup> The AME Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2012* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2014), 272–275, Kindle. It “is an appropriation of God’s word for guidance in the rule of daily life and the administration of God’s work in and through the church.”

they attended as their “father or mother in the ministry,” but that person may not be the person to mentor them.

In this present project, I develop a biblically based model for ecclesiastical mentoring of female clergy. To build this model, I study and analyze biblical characters who demonstrate mentoring capacity or that otherwise exemplify important principles of mentorship. These characters include the Old Testament Moses, Deborah, and Huldah. Additionally, I examine Jesus’ empowerment of women such as Mary of Bethany. Finally, I explore the benefits and drawbacks of applying business models and biblical mentoring principles.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The Need for Ecclesiastical Mentors

Why is female clergy mentoring needed in the church? Here are three connected reasons: First, God intentionally created the female in God’s image because male “alone” was unacceptable and required “them” to multiply (Gen. 1:27–28).<sup>4</sup> As such, mentoring will help women affirm their likeness in God’s image and their semblance of God’s manners as *ezer*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I want to thank my project consultant Nichole Renèe Phillips, Ph.D., program director Brent Strawn, Ph.D., all my outstanding instructors within the Emory Doctor of Ministry Program, and the mentoring team curriculum trial run participants Presiding Elder Joyce J. Moore, Presiding Elder Valerie J. Walker, Rev. Bettye Watson, Rev. Kimberly Stockton, and Rev. Johanna James.

<sup>4</sup> All translations in this paper are taken from the *New American Standard Bible (NASB)*, unless otherwise noted. For the Hebrew words used, see James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), accessed through BibleWorks, v.10.

<sup>5</sup> Phyllis Trible, “Eve and Miriam: From the Margins to the Center,” in *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1995), 197–201, Kindle. Trible suggests that the English translation of *ezer* as “a helper” in Gen. 2:18 and 10 is “totally misleading” because it infers that the female is the male’s assistant or his inferior. However, *ezer* is “used most often in the Hebrew Bible to describe God. God is the

Second, female mentoring can both protect and memorialize women's accomplishments and positive stories, especially since they may be overlooked or misinterpreted by biblical interpreters, church leaders, ministers, and laity. Sheerah, Ephraim's daughter, is a glaring example of being overlooked. Long before Solomon was born, she built lower Beth-horon, upper Beth-horon, and Uzen-sheerah. Yet, her legacy is usurped by many English Bible translations of 2 Chron. 8:5 that credit Solomon for "building" rather than "rebuilding" two of the cities (1 Chron. 7:24, 2 Chron. 8:5).<sup>6</sup> Third, mentoring might also help to clarify misinterpretation of those biblical texts that have been problematic and crippling to women in ministry (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 14:3).

The integrity of God's story is not holistically interpreted without the conjoined perspective of women's voices, interpretations, and contributions. As such, women have a responsibility to come to the biblical interpretation table and to address the scriptures especially in their roles as ministers. Rickie Moore made a good case for persons in prophetic leadership vocations being obligated to mentor and not act as "lone rangers" in their office of authority. He further stated that: "The concern for mentoring is not only present in the literature but prominent to the point of making it arguably one of the constitutive facets of the OT prophetic vocation."<sup>7</sup>

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helper of Israel. And when we hear that God is the helper of Israel, we never think that God is inferior to Israel."

<sup>6</sup> The word *banah* can be translated as "built" or "rebuilt." Whether unintentionally or instinctively, in 2 Chron. 8:5 many English Bibles translate *banah* as "built" rather than "rebuilt" thus crediting Solomon for building two of the cities, and thereby omitting Sheerah's legacy. Yet, in the same book the translators are mindful to translate *banah* as "rebuilt" or "built up" regarding Hezekiah's rebuilding of the Jerusalem wall (2 Chron. 32:5).

<sup>7</sup> Rickie D. Moore, "The Prophet as Mentor: A Crucial Facet of the Biblical Presentations of Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 2007): 56, accessed June 26, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS*, EBSCOhost.

His argument should be extended beyond the Old Testament period to current ecclesiastical vocations and specifically include women.

According to the Nyambura J. Njoroge, “women have a critical and prophetic role to play in ‘stirring waters’ and ‘speaking the truth’ by asserting their God-given humanity and gifts—not for their own sake but for the sake of the integrity of the gospel.”<sup>8</sup> When God blesses a female minister to shine in leadership or to break the ceilings of senior leadership, she is in a good position to mentor women into leadership.

In certain circles, people might ask if such mentorship could be accomplished easily enough across genders: with a man mentoring women or a woman mentoring men. The answer, generally, would be positive on both counts since clergy struggles are similar. But it remains clear that female clergy face obstacles unique to them that are not faced by men, as by other female professionals. These may include implicit societal misogyny, misunderstanding of females’ adeptness for serving in certain roles, secret wariness by men and women of the rising influx of women into ministry armed with the educational requirements to lead, women-to-women and men-to-women conflicts, or even the unfamiliarity of women working in male-

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<sup>8</sup> Nyambura J. Njoroge, “The Role of Women in the Church,” in *Africa Bible Commentary*, eds. Tokunboh Adeyemo et al., 2nd ed. (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers, Zondervan, 2010), 1497.



dominated fields.<sup>9</sup> Obstacles such as these only exacerbate the struggles female clergy face.<sup>10</sup>

Within the confines of the church, women in ministry will best confront such difficulties with the help of the Holy Scriptures.

### The General Call to Mentor

Patriarchal cultures and androcentric focused scholars have given a substantial but partial view of God's story, with little contribution of women's voices. Neither male nor female has absolute and exclusive sovereignty over the mandate to multiply and rule. There is a "themness" in God's intent. Women many times have not been affirmed in their image of God and have not themselves understood their mandate to multiply and rule. Therefore, women bishops, presiding elders, pastors, teachers and others who have broken ceilings and prophetic boundaries should be preparing other women for succession. They should never relish or rest comfortably in being a gender oddity in senior positions of church leadership or one of the only of her kind in these positions.

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<sup>9</sup> Kim Parker, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, and Renee Stepler, "On Gender Differences, No Consensus on Nature vs. Nurture: Americans Say Society Places a Higher Premium on Masculinity than on Femininity," Pew Research Center, December 5, 2017, accessed February 16, 2018, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/12/05/on-gender-differences-no-consensus-on-nature-vs-nurture/>; Cary Funk and Kim Parker, "Women and Men in STEM often at Odds Over Workplace Equity: Perceived Inequities are Especially Common among Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Jobs Who Work Mostly with Men," Pew Research Center, January 9, 2018, accessed February 16, 2018, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/01/09/women-and-men-in-stem-often-at-odds-over-workplace-equity/>; Kim Parker and Cary Funk, "Gender Discrimination Comes in Many Forms for Today's Working Women," Pew Research Center, December 14, 2017, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Women and Leadership: Public Says Women are Equally Qualified, but Barriers Persist," Pew Research Center, January 14, 2015, accessed February 6, 2018, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/01/14/women-and-leadership/>.

Just as Harriet Tubman, a resolute freed African American woman refused to separate from her enslaved people but reached back to lead other slaves to freedom, women ministers must reach back to help other clergywomen succeed in their ministry. Unfortunately, even today, some women ministers find comfort in segregating themselves from other women in ministerial leadership for fear they might upset the dominant male model of ministry or for fear of being typecasted and stereotyped as aggressive women. They might even enjoy knowing they are the only women in such positions and resist bringing other women ministers into their respective groups and spaces. Hence, mentoring is a means to an end and especially necessary for advancing into higher ranks of Kingdom leadership; it is a role and capacity that many have yet to embrace fully.

Walter Brueggemann, in his article “A Response to Rickie Moore’s ‘The Prophet as Mentor,’” said that he wished to “accent the *continuity* of testimony from one person to another and, perhaps because of that, from one generation to another.<sup>11</sup> That is what intentional ecclesiastical women mentoring should seek to do. Brueggemann offers that “prophets may stand at the center of the mentoring process” and “mentoring has a *substantive content*, namely, for resistance to and subversion of dominant theo-political opinion.”<sup>12</sup> Given this, women in ministry are obligated to resist misguided conscriptions meant to keep them “in their places.” As they become more proficient in biblical interpretation through their God-given female lenses, mentoring and teaching will afford them the opportunity to change such debilitating theo-

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<sup>11</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “A Response to Rickie Moore’s ‘The Prophet as Mentor,’” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 2007): 174, accessed June 26, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS*, EBSCOhost.

<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann, “A Response,” 174.

political opinions. Although the paper supports one-on-one mentoring strategy, much can also be gained when women are mentored in group settings. Rickie Moore renders such an example as he focuses more on group mentoring (elders and the Israelite community) than the one-on-one mentoring represented by Moses of Joshua.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Issues of Women and Local AME Women in Ministry

A recent Pew Research Center article by Aleksandra Sandstrom states, “While many large religious organizations in the United States allow women to be ordained—and to hold leadership positions within the organization—few women have served at the very top.”<sup>14</sup> Since its establishment in 1816, the AME church has elected four capable female bishops with strong, faithful, and dutiful backgrounds who have led or presently lead both men and women. The first female bishop was elected in 2000, only eighteen years ago.

Nevertheless, there are few presiding elders in each episcopal district and numerous other little-known clergywomen in the AME church who are committed to serving God regardless of the assignment and though humble the charges. Several of these women have bivocations in engineering, science, sociology, education, administration, law, business, and medical professions. Some have, like the New Testament disciples, abandoned their professions for the sake of ministry. Many now earn low wages because their local churches cannot afford to pay a full salary. Some struggle in remote places, never assuming that their ministry can be more

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<sup>13</sup> Moore, “The Prophet as Mentor,” 157–161. Here he more details Joshua and Moses’ relationship from the Deuteronomy passages 31:1–3, 7–8, and 14–23.

<sup>14</sup> Aleksandra Sandstrom, “Women Relatively Rare in Top Positions of Religious Leadership,” Pew Research Center, March 2, 2016, accessed June 22, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/02/women-relatively-rare-in-top-positions-of-religious-leadership/>.

effective. But only if more seasoned clergywomen were there to walk beside them. These senior clergywomen could show them the way to travel, be resources for potential financial as well as spiritual support, help to develop them for expanded service, or encourage them to use their previous professional experiences to assist one another in ministry.

The AME Boards of Examiners and accredited seminaries strive to prepare women for ministry via courses and practical experiences. However, as indicated by Nathan H. Chiroma and Anita Louisa Cloete, ministerial training should not be reduced to a mere intellectual exercise.<sup>15</sup> These authors recognize the need for mentoring as a form of supportive pedagogy for students in theological schools and to prepare them for church ministry. Still, long-term mentoring by “encouraging and strengthening” would better prepare students to face the challenges outside classroom settings over a short-term mentoring model that only fulfills a curricular requirement. Since most persons will spend only a few years in these schools, the school-term is hardly sufficient to meet the practical needs of their own church contexts.

In the AME Central Conference in Florida, the venue of this research, 2017 statistics show that women make up 48% of the ministerial roster but only 27 out of this growing number of 101 clergy are women pastors. Of the 73 churches in the conference, there are no women pastors serving in churches ranked in the top 20%. Seventy-five percent of these 27 women pastors serve in churches ranked 50% or below. Additionally, of the 16 churches ranked 80% or below, 75% of these are led by women pastors.

A recent survey of potential mentee and mentors was conducted by the local AME Women in Ministry (WIM) group meeting to determine the need for mentorship. There were 21

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<sup>15</sup> Nathan H. Chiroma and Anita Louisa Cloete, “Mentoring as a Supportive Pedagogy in Theological Training,” *Hervormde teologiese studies* 71, no. 3 (2015): 1–8, accessed June 23, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS*, EBSCOhost.

women who participated and 40% of the total surveys were returned.<sup>16</sup> Of these women, 2 had doctoral degrees, 11 masters, 7 bachelors, and 1 had only a high school diploma. Their ministerial tenures ranged from 3 to 27 years. The survey primarily inquired information about their positions, mentorship experiences, current ministerial programming and involvement, and what they deemed the personal characteristics and qualities of esteemed women ministers.

Our findings suggest none of the survey participants have ever been enrolled in a formal or an intentional mentoring process, but some expressed that they experienced informal mentoring. For example, one participant who is a female presiding elder was mentored by a male but she expressed that she would prefer seeing and having female mentors. When asked about their concerns for women in ministry, respondents identified: inadequate appointments and career advancements, the lack of community and congregational acceptance of newly appointed pastors, gender conflicts, difficulties with church plants, lack of trust among women, and the separatism that sometimes exists between women ministers. These survey results suggest that women must re-evaluate the benefits of having women in ministry norms reset by their own faith communities to envision change and promotion. These norms include such things as identifying inadequacies more clearly than strengths and adhering to generic female personalities theories.<sup>17</sup>

### **3. Exegetical Studies: Biblical Mentorship Models**

The Old and New Testaments have sometimes been misinterpreted as being oppressive to women and women's leadership particularly because women's stories have not been sufficiently

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix A, Tables 1–4.

<sup>17</sup> See Note 48.

interpreted or used as positive mentoring models. Though scriptural text is male-dominated, it should not be viewed as “anti-women.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, some scriptures have been deliberately read out of context to oppress women. Obliviousness and apathy to female contributions confine and blind both males and females to revelatory biblical interpretation and proclamation. Such blindness stifles women and prevents them from “coming into their own authentic voice,” through interpreting their own stories and mentoring other women to become all they can be.<sup>19</sup>

Scriptures have already proven that females can hold strong leadership positions and have been intrinsically involved in liberating, protecting, and undergirding Kingdom leadership. The scriptures make evident women’s roles as judges, scholars, builders, prophetesses, benefactors, mothers, single women, wives ruling beside the patriarchs, and leaders (i.e. Deborah, Huldah, Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, Anna, Zipporah, Asenath, Hagar, the Queen of Sheba, and Solomon’s bride who reigned beside him as he built God’s temple and other structures (1 Kings 3:1). However, acknowledgment of women’s prophetic, participatory, salvific contributions must be made beyond androcentric lenses, a courtesy mention, or unintentional oversight. Who goes beyond the lectionary sequence to expound on these women? Who preaches their sermons? I want to suggest those who are women mentors and want to mentor women. Mentoring will inspire women and encourage men to share the biblical stories of women and to present these stories, positively. Because this is the case, in the next sections, I will examine four mentoring

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<sup>18</sup> Mary J. Evans, “Women,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 903.

<sup>19</sup> Christie Cozad Neuger, *Counseling Women* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 65–91.

models from the Holy Scriptures that look to men but mainly feature women leaders and their stories.

### The Prophet Moses and Joshua

*'But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.'* (Deut. 3:28)

It would be presumptuous to suggest constructing a women's ecclesiastical mentoring model without first considering other successful models, regardless of gender affiliation. To overlook male gendered relationships would counter our "themness" message. With that in mind, we will first consider the Moses and Joshua relationship as a successful mentorship model. The faith community highly recognizes the scripturally rich God-directed relationship of Moses and Joshua as foundational for other subsequent prophetic mentorships. Women ministers can embrace Moses and Joshua's mentoring model by applying the wealth of mentorship principles embedded throughout their relationship and garnered from their story to a women's mentorship program.

Joshua, son of Nun, is introduced to the biblical readers after the Israelite slaves' exodus from Egypt (Exod. 17:9). He was a descendant of Joseph and his African wife, Asenath the daughter of an Egyptian priest, through their son Ephraim.<sup>20</sup> Like Ephraim who was adopted by his grandfather Jacob and was privileged because of Joseph's legacy, Joshua's ties to his grandfather Elishama, the Ephraimite leader, might have gained him favor within the slave ranks. This would have allowed him the opportunity to develop military skills similar to Moses', his mentor (Gen. 47:28, 48:1).

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<sup>20</sup> Num.1:1, 10, 16.

Prior to his defection, Moses who was a descendant of the Levi tribe lived a privileged lifestyle in Egypt with benefits afforded to princes (Acts 7:30; Exod.7:7).<sup>21</sup> He was a humble, intelligent man who was adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, a royal African woman who thankfully rescued him as an infant from a death edict pronounced by Pharaoh. As a nurturing mother, she would have "encouraged and strengthened" him by molding his character and beginning at two-years of age even while he lived under his strong-man, politically and militarily radical grandfather's (the Pharaoh's) rule.<sup>22</sup> Moses lost his standing with the Pharaoh when he tried to aid one of his Hebrew slave kinsmen by killing an Egyptian. This forced him into exile outside of Egypt and into a land where he lived a less privileged lifestyle and as a stranger.

However, God would not allow him to escape his moral obligation to give back to the community all that God had already invested in him. God requires that of us today. Because of God's stipulation, Moses reinvests in the Israelites and consequently leads God's people out of their Egyptian oppression and bondage. He accomplishes this through God's mentorship of him that then enables him to give back and to guide the Israelites out of bondage and into freedom. Joshua, a member of the Israelite group is also mentored; but unbeknownst to both men, Joshua eventually becomes Moses' successor (Num. 12:3).

After the exodus, Moses assigned Joshua to fight the attacking Amalek army in Rephidim, allowing him to form his own army (Exod. 17:8–16). He more than likely saw in

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<sup>21</sup> Flavius Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," in *Josephus: The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), 57–58. Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes Moses as having superior understanding, beauty, and having been "educated with great care." He was also a strategic Egyptian army warrior. Also see Acts 7:21–22.

<sup>22</sup> Tamar Kadari, "Daughter of Pharaoh: Midrash and Aggadah," in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, Jewish Women Archive, 2009, accessed February 6, 2018, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/daughter-of-pharaoh-midrash-and-aggadah>.



Joshua's decisive and determinate spirit a reflection of himself as a strategic leader.<sup>23</sup> During the battle, Joshua found his warfare to be impotent unless Moses raised his staff for victory. Moses' lifted hands were meant to establish Joshua respect for God. God's mentorship, direction, and intentionality are clearly seen as God requires Moses to document the victory and recite it repeatedly to Joshua, thus "encouraging and strengthening" him for the future.

Along their journey, Moses allowed his mentee, Joshua, to accompany him to the Sinai mountaintop where he received the commandments; yet, he left Aaron, Hur, and other prominent elders behind.<sup>24</sup> Joshua could not enter the mountainous cloud with his mentor so Moses left him alone to wait (Exod. 24:12–18). Here, the mentoring strategy was to allow the mentee time to experience God with the mentor, but also to teach him lessons about privilege and boundaries. Joshua gains three other insights from the journey—patience, personal worship, and survival. His patience was strengthened while he waited; his worship was deepened in the aloneness of devotion; and his survival was resolute in the forty days.

When Joshua descends with Moses from Mt. Sinai, in his naivety he thinks he hears the Israelites shouting as if in war, but they are actually worshipping a golden calf. Moses, as his mentor gives him a reality check on the people's severe unfaithfulness. From this, he would learn not to put these religious leaders and the people on pedestals. That is another lesson that can be applied today.

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<sup>23</sup> Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," 68. Josephus indicated that by this time Joshua was already courageous, having patience and proper speaking abilities, good understanding, and was "very serious in the worship of God" much like Moses himself. According to Josephus, Moses began teaching Joshua the exploits of battle, while encouraging him.

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 17:1–3, 16–18. This is reminiscent of the transfiguration where Jesus brought Peter, James and John to the mountaintop, leaving the other disciples behind and returning to cast out a demon.

Too many people have left ministries because they have been shattered by persons they revered. The mentor's job is to keep fledging ministers steady by understanding that God's plan is larger than the shortcomings of an individual or group(s) and to show the mentee the high road despite disappointments. Moses loses his cool, yet in righteous indignation he still petitions God on the people's behalf allowing Joshua to witness correction but to wrestle with two lessons (Exod. 32:19). In both instances, Joshua learns about human fallibility and about a leader's heart; that is, leaders intercede for followers despite the people's shortcomings.

During the mentorship, it is important that both parties understand they must carry on their own primary activities, in addition to the mentoring relationship. Apparently, Joshua in his jealousy (as Moses presumed) expected Moses' prophetic gifts to be shared exclusively with him or those he thought worthy. That is dangerous for any healthy relationship (Num. 11:25–29). However, Joshua carries on his duties outside of Moses' direct view allowing Joshua to apply the lessons he gained from the mentoring relationship with Moses. He did so in scouting out the Promised Land. In solidarity with Caleb, he provides a positive report against the majority of leaders' negative feedback (Numbers 13), which was evidence for the positive nature of his relationship with Moses. Additionally, because of that defining moment, God deems him worthy to enter the Promised Land.

Unfortunately, Moses would neither enter the Promised Land because of his infamous "rock hitting" episode nor would he be able to decide on his successor (Num. 20:12, 27:15–18; Deut. 3:27–28).<sup>25</sup> Even though Moses prepared Joshua for leadership, the succession was God's choice. God had appointed Joshua. In the same way, the Bishop makes the decision to appoint

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<sup>25</sup> Matt. 17:3. Moses' appearance with Jesus is a testament to his entrance into the ultimate "Promised Land."

women clergy to charges and churches. Moses' responsibility towards Joshua was to "encourage and strengthen him" until his own death (Deut. 3:28; 31:7–8; 34:7–12). He commissioned Joshua openly before the people and delegated him some of his authority. Here ecclesiastical mentoring can be translated into the dedicated and lifelong commitment of mentor towards mentee(s).

### The Prophetess Deborah, Mother in Israel, Who Mentored Barak

*Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. (Judg. 4:4–5)*

Before discussing her mentorship model, it is worth noting that Prophetess Deborah stands as a sign of the strength of women in leadership and against any patriarchal notion that women cannot lead. God Himself raised her up to be a prophet, judge, deliverer, and mother of Israel. No one in the ancient Israelite community opposed her appointment to leadership or any of her leadership gifts and capacities (Judg. 2:16, 5:7).

In fact, Carol Meyers suggests Deborah's Hebraic roots as the "wife of Lappidoth" could equally mean "fiery (or spirited) woman" (lit., "woman of torches") and that her many roles "as an autonomous woman in national life would warrant her name appearing with the epithet 'fiery woman' and without reference to a man."<sup>26</sup> She implied that translators were unlikely to make an acknowledgment that a woman's identity could stand alone. While agreeing that Meyers' general perception regarding translation perceptions hold true, based on careful word study, the *'ēšet* is more likely properly translated as "wife of."

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<sup>26</sup> Carol Meyers, "Deborah," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Meyers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10.

Deborah more than likely falls within Sheerah and Joshua's Ephraimite family lineage. Her role was similar to that of the prophet Moses in adjudicating the people's matters on God's behalf and giving prophetic oracles of God (Exod. 18:6–14). She also appears to quintessentially pattern Rickie Moore's explanation of Moses as "a father who functions as a mentor to the children of Israel. And he does so in a paradigmatic way, for in exercising the mentoring role he also models it and mandates it, explicitly and repeatedly, as the future responsibility and expectation of both this new generation and all subsequent generations of the children of Israel."<sup>27</sup> Similar to Moses' "parental" role, Deborah identifies herself as "mother in Israel" in her song (Judg. 5:7).<sup>28</sup>

As the mother of Israel, Deborah summons Barak into military action, asking him if God has already told him to go to battle. He responds by declaring that he will go only if she accompanies him. This seems to be either a request for the assurance of victory, a dare, a scare, or outright rebellion (Judg. 4:6-8).

As his mentor and as a leader of the people during her tenure, Deborah's presence guarantees that Barak will receive the victory. By all biblical accounts, Deborah fought alongside Barak since she had agreed to his request. However, the New Testament Hebrew writer, androcentrically and dismissively, fails to honor her leadership or mentorship on the honor roll of faith in Hebrews 11:32. Instead, Barak is named in her stead along with other male judges such as Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, and Samuel (Heb. 11:32). Deborah, however, pays tribute to Barak and Jabin in her victory song (Judg. 5). In fact, biblical commentators agree that he joins her in the song where she is clearly identified as an Israelite leader, chronicler, and prophet. Like

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<sup>27</sup> Moore, "The Prophet as Mentor," 160.

<sup>28</sup> Judg.5:7. The *em* in this verse could be translated as "mother" or "a mother."

a good mentor, she “encouraged and strengthened” Barak in his assignment and gave him praise after the mission was completed.

### The Prophetess Huldah: Community and Women

*She said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to me, thus says the LORD...’”*  
(2 Kings 22:15–16)

The prophetess Huldah served during Jeremiah’s period. She is believed to have been a preacher and schooler of women who stood in the company of other great prophetesses.<sup>29</sup> Robin Branch notes: “According to Jewish tradition, Huldah had an academy or school house in Jerusalem. She and Jeremiah were kinsfolk and divided prophetic functions between them, Jeremiah preaching to the men and Huldah to the women.”<sup>30</sup> After discovering the indictment filled law book found during the temple renovation, King Josiah needed an intermediary to authenticate the scripture and to petition God on behalf of himself and people of Judah. At his direction, the male priests, scribes and the king’s servant without hesitation went directly to Prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22:8–23:28).

Her prominence among the prophets is striking because of her command of Hebrew scripture and scholarship and the community’s confidence in her ability to speak to and for God. The community understood her to be God’s appointed prophet and mediator even though she

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<sup>29</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo et al., eds., *Africa Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed. (Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive Publishers; Zondervan, 2010), 463, 528, 550; Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 599; Tamar Kadari, “Huldah, the Prophet: Midrash and Aggadah,” in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, Jewish Women Archive, 2009, accessed September 9, 2017, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/huldah-prophet-midrash-and-aggadah>.

<sup>30</sup> Robin Gallaher Branch, “Huldah,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Meyers, and Astrid B Beck, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10. Huldah authenticated the law book during Josiah’s reign. She also foretold of Jerusalem’s destruction.

served during the period of two mighty male contemporaries, Jeremiah and Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1; Jer. 25:1).

King Josiah and the community “apparently recognized her as a Mosaic prophet, who was capable of interceding with Yahweh” because she exhibited the “behavioral characteristics typical of Ephraimite intermediaries.”<sup>31</sup> As such, she would have filled a socio-political role in the community by using her prophetic voice and authority. Yet, some scholars attempt to credit Josiah’s reform to Zephaniah rather than Huldah’s prophecy.<sup>32</sup> This move is also characteristic of silencing women in today’s society where their contributions are oftentimes dismissed and ascribed to their male counterparts, especially if the women are quiet about their own contributions and history and if other women fail to tell their sisters’ stories.

The Hebrew Scriptures are characteristically scant about Huldah’s background and most English Bible translations say that Huldah lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter (2 Kings 22:14). The English verse could possibly be translated without side notes as “*and she sat in Jerusalem in second and they spoke with her* (2 Kings 22:14; Judg. 4:4; Exod. 18:13).<sup>33</sup> To

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<sup>31</sup> Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 59, 156, 220, 300. “There is a hierarchy of prophets, at the top of which stands the Mosaic prophet, who hears the word of God directly and whose word is always accurate. In addition to speaking the true word of God, this prophet also functions as intercessor for the people.” He identifies Huldah as a “central” prophet.” These types of intermediaries have undergone lengthy validation, with a “degree of wealth, social power, and prestige” and they “regulate social, political, and religious change.”

<sup>32</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 168. Bullock never mentions Huldah but says Zephaniah’s preaching possibly “pricked Josiah’s conscience and helped to initiate the reform.”

<sup>33</sup> Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 54-55. Scholars are almost unanimously agreed that *mishneh* here refers to a second quarter or section in the city of Jerusalem (2 Kings 22:4). While this makes sense of the phrase that is used here, it should be noted that a specific word designating a part of the city is not used and this leads to some ambiguity in how best to understand *mishneh*. In light of this detail and the fact

translate the verb in this scripture as “sat” rather than “dwelt” would be an appropriate language for a person of authority. The Rabbinic material describing Huldah is highly androcentric and attempts to appease for Huldah’s selection over a male to authenticate the temple law book as Holy Scripture.<sup>34</sup> She was likely sought over Jeremiah for her expertise rather than her gender.

Again, we see another strong woman within the Ephraimite lineage.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the Judaic Rabbinic material interpreted scripture in a way that viewed both Huldah and Deborah as being “haughty” women because of their names and actions.<sup>36</sup> Once again, we can see harmful adaptations being used to disempower women for “breaking the rules of being female.” Mentors must be cognizant of these types of biases and help other women cope when others deem them “haughty” because they decide to live out their God-given roles.

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that Hebrew also has an ordinal number, *sheni*, for ‘second,’ one wonders if it is possible if *mishneh* refers, not to where Huldah dwells but to her rank—namely, that she is second. This cannot be ascertained with certainty and the weight of scholarship along with Nahman Avigad’s archeological evidence of the city section’s existence is against this suggestion, but if correct, it would underscore even further the importance of Huldah in the narrative.

<sup>34</sup> Lowell K Handy, “Reading Huldah as Being a Woman,” *Biblical Research*, Vol. 55 (2010): 5–44, accessed October 26, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost. See his notes 22, 25 and 26. See Robin Gallaher Branch, “Huldah,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. According to Branch, “Some speculate the male prophets were away. Rabbinic commentary, however, maintains that Josiah thought a woman would be more compassionate and more likely to intercede with God on his behalf (Meg. 14b).”

<sup>35</sup> Handy, “Reading Huldah as Being a Woman,” 25. In discussing Huldah he says, “For Wilson, therefore, Huldah belongs to the Jerusalem elite as a typical Ephraimite prophet and a professional court prophet as well. Her influence can be seen in the reforms by Josiah prior to the discovery of the scroll in the temple.”

<sup>36</sup> William Davidson, trans., “b. Megillah 14b,” in *The William Davidson Talmud*, Babylonian Talmud, n.d., accessed September 11, 2017, <https://www.sefaria.org/Megillah.14b.11?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en>. The Rabbis’ attempt to relate Deborah’s name as a “bee” and Huldah name as “weasel” to tag them as “haughty women” because of their mannerism toward Barak and Josiah is not supported by scripture.

It is unfortunate that were Huldah living today some women would diminish Huldah's standing just because men sought her out for her knowledge. Such biblical commentators have said: "Since she is a woman used by or in league with the patriarchal male-empowering reforms of Josiah and his clique, she gives legitimacy to the undermining of women by these monarchic men."<sup>37</sup> Here is an example of a strong woman who mentors others, including women, and achieves great breakthroughs in male-dominated arenas. Yet, she still is criticized for her achievements by other women because she maintained and held power and authority in both male and female circles. This sometimes happens in women ministry circles resulting in women being alienated from each another. An intentional mentoring effort would dispel some of these superfluous assumptions and allow these women their rightful recognition.

In Brueggemann's reading of Moore's article, he acknowledged Jeremiah's strong, powerful scribal and political family connections which led him "to think Jeremiah may indeed have been instructed and mentored and been a guiding force for a theological vision that had subversive political implications."<sup>38</sup> If this is the case, it would be natural to assume that Huldah, Jeremiah's counterpart, would also have been part of a community mentoring experience and would have also mentored women through her school. In the context of prophetic obligation, biblical commentators suggest she mentored men also. The Hebrew writers did not provide enough information to elaborate. Readers do not know the extent of Huldah's full ministry

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<sup>37</sup> Judith McKinlay, "Gazing at Huldah," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1, no. 3 (February 14, 2011), accessed September 13, 2017, <http://novaajs.newcastle.edu.au/ojsbct/index.php/bct/article/view/40>, 15:5–6. McKinlay suggested that Huldah is being manipulated as a woman to silence the feminine deity, Asherah, further saying, "Not only must that silencing have been painful for the women of her own time, but the results of that policy have profoundly affected the ways of speaking of the divine for several millennia of Judeo-Christian believers."

<sup>38</sup> Brueggemann, "A Response," 174.



because of her brief mention and the silence of the text, but the text's revelatory lines point to her position and authority.

So far, we have already named Deborah, Sheerah, and Huldah as strong, influential Ephramite mentoring women. If Brueggemann and Moore's assumptions are correct about mentorship, it is likely that these women handed down their stories, scriptural applications, were received, mentored and formed for leadership by others.

### Jesus and Mary of Bethany

*"Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." (Matt. 26:13) But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." ( Luke 10:41-42)*

While it is obvious that Jesus mentored men amidst an imperialistic Roman and patriarchal Judaic social system, it should be noted that he also mentored women and is today's ideal model for men and women mentors. Mary of Bethany was one of Jesus' disciples with whom he shared a one-on-one mentoring relationship.<sup>39</sup> She experienced obstacles similar to those faced by women in ministry today, including implicit societal misogyny, misunderstanding of females' adeptness for serving in certain roles, women-to-women, and men-to-women conflicts.<sup>40</sup> As her mentor, Jesus practiced the ministry of "encouraging and strengthening."

In Ron Belsterling's article on "The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13," he agrees with others that Jesus' mentoring approach involved: "(1) casting and

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<sup>39</sup> D. Michael Crow, "Multiplying Jesus Mentors: Designing a Reproducible Mentoring System: A Case Study," *Missiology* 36, no. 1 (January 2008), 92, accessed June 24, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS*, EBSCOhost.

<sup>40</sup> Matt. 26:6–13; Luke 10:39–42; John 12:2–17.

communicating a life vision, (2) teaching through: (a) verbal instruction, and (b) experiential learning in the context of (c) a secure, mutually committed relationship; (3) intimate relationships with mentees (protégés), in which they are allowed to determine some of the direction of teaching based on questions and life circumstances, and; (4) enduring life-long relationships, though they may vary in frequency of contact.”<sup>41</sup> Mary sat at Jesus’ feet with scholarly attention to “hear[ing] the Word” herself (ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ) (Luke 10:39).<sup>42</sup> Martha’s demand for Mary to leave Jesus’ company and to help her with domestic duties is problematic because it can be perceived as a woman trying to limit another woman to the domestic realm rather than allowing her to shine in a leadership (i.e., ecclesiastical) role (Luke 10:40). Women ministers should arm themselves against this kind of thinking even as other females try to make similar demands on them.

Jesus points out that Martha’s worry is not just about this one incident, but many things; yet, he does not elaborate on what these are. Those who may feel marginalized, abandoned or mistreated are more apt to live in a worried state. Jesus’ protective response towards Martha in favor of Mary should not be considered a “rebuke” or “dismissive” but as him placing emphasis

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<sup>41</sup> Ron Belsterling, “The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13,” *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 5, no. 1 (September 2006), 79, accessed June 24, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials PLUS*, EBSCOhost.

<sup>42</sup> Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10. The Greek τὸν definite article is an accusative masculine singular form. It signifies Mary’s intensive listening at Jesus’ feet to hear “the word” herself. Friberg indicates: “The “αὐτός, ἡ, ὁ (1) is an intensive pronoun to emphasize identity, setting the individual person or thing apart from others, used of all persons, genders, and numbers; (a) in the nominative case to intensify the subject -self, -selves e.g. αὐ. ἐγώ I myself (2C 10.1); αὐτοὶ ὑμεῖς you yourselves (JN 3.28); αὐ. σώσει he himself will save (MT 1.21).” Example of “the word” can also be seen in Luke 5:1, 8:12, 8:21.

on “hearing the Word” and therefore should not quickly be taken as criticism. It was a teaching moment given to her, just as he had given to male disciples. He communicated his life’s vision to her as well as Mary, just as he had done at their brother Lazarus’ gravesite (John 11:24–27). The intimate relationship allowed both women to be memorialized in God’s story of belief and glorification (John 11:4).

A conversation about the sisters’ relationship may be profitable during the ecclesiastical mentoring process when discussing different personality types and role assignments. For example, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza investigates the conflicts between the two women and Jesus through the hermeneutics of suspicion, remembrance, evaluation, proclamation and lastly imagination.<sup>43</sup>

Martha is a practical domestic-oriented woman while Mary is a passive but radically devoted and assertive woman who uncompromisingly sat with Jesus to study. In fulfilling that role, he granted Mary a space among his male disciples. Ben Witherington implies that Jesus’ view on women was outside of the mainstream of his Judaic culture and restrictions because he was willing to have itinerant female disciples.<sup>44</sup> In his role as a Rabbi, he also taught them.

Unlike Witherington, Cornelis Bennema holds a different opinion of Mary. He stereotypes Mary because she cried to Jesus regarding her brother Lazarus’ death. He typecasts her tears as emotional and characterizes her as having a lack of faith.<sup>45</sup> His approach to

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<sup>43</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Beacon Press, 1993), 52–76.

<sup>44</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus’ Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 114–116.

<sup>45</sup> Cornelis Bennema, “Mary of Bethany: At Jesus’ Feet,” in *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2014), 267–

interpreting her character and actions is patriarchal and androcentric. He forgets that Jesus wept when he saw Mary weeping; and curiously even though Jesus shows such great emotion, Bennema does not consider him overly emotional or weak.

Jesus and Mary's mentor-mentee relationship was reciprocal, not out of necessity, but because of love and devotion. Mary's commitment to Jesus and their relationship is displayed through her anointing of her mentor's feet with the costly spikenard oil and in wiping them with her hair. There she assumes a submissive posture and makes a prophetic gesture which suggests she was filling a priestly role. Jesus allows and justifies this altruistic behavior which ultimately upsets His male disciples who call Mary out despite her generosity (John 12:3-8, Mark 14:4).<sup>46</sup>

#### Reflecting on the Biblical Models of Mentorship

All four of the mentoring models uniquely promoted the significance of camaraderie, an ability to communicate scripture, and the necessity of clarifying and casting visions via mentor-mentee relationships that "strengthened and encouraged." Through intimate sharing of God's word, these ecclesiastical models have shown that women can get the job done even in the face of frustrations, disturbances, and obstacles. A mentoring community has the ability and power to assist in the development and growth of women leaders for ministry, accomplished through careful exegesis as well as teaching and proclaiming scripture; and through mentors tasked with shaping their ministries. Like Jesus does throughout the New Testament scriptures, Moses shows Joshua the way, developing him into a leader of Israel. These men's willingness to submit to

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274, accessed October 20, 2017,  
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/j.ctt9m0t70.22>.

<sup>46</sup> Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 115.

mentoring relationships suggests that women who participate in such relationships will reap similar benefits.

Christie Neuger noted that “women’s experiences have largely been left out of the culture’s stories and that men’s experiences and interpretations, which are the dominant cultures have been used as normative in creating theories (and theologies).”<sup>47</sup> Her critiques foreground Mary Ballou and Nancy Gabalac’s outline of harmful adaptations used to disempower women including the following: humiliation, inculcation by way of teaching females to be females (that is, following female norms and assumed personality types), retribution or punishment for breaking the rules of being female, and women trying to make other women follow conceptions of how females should act and carry out their duties.<sup>48</sup> Armed with this knowledge, women must apply scriptural interpretation and experience to gain the benefits of mentoring within their culture and to build confidence and inclusivity.

As Neuger posits, women are taught to see their inadequacies more clearly than their strengths. Generic personality theories have traditionally been accepted as norms, such as healthy women are less aggressive or more submissive, but the mentorship models show otherwise. Females mentors can help other females highlight and build up their strengths and consider more feminist norms to shape women for leadership and based on scripture.

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<sup>47</sup> Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 2–3, 34. Neuger highlights the fact that feminist and womanist thoughts are similar in transforming “all lives, relationships, system, and cultures so that they are inclusive, life affirming.” She differentiates the womanist’s challenges to include “privileging the African American women’s (and other women of color) experiences, voices, and perspectives in building theory, theology, and practices” as well as integrating and observation of other distinct race, gender and cultural factors.

<sup>48</sup> Neuger, *Counseling Women*, 47. For the work of Ballou and Gabalac, see Mary B. Ballou and Nancy W. Gabalac, *A Feminist Position on Mental Health* (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1985).

African American women must counter harmful adaptations by integrating their womanist voices, experiences, and exegetical skills and applying them to the text in order to interpret the scripture theologically. When developing mentors for the AME Women in Ministry, it is important to hear women's voices in scripture. What must be added are the voices of womanist theologians and African American biblical scholars like Teresa Fry-Brown, Jacqueline Grant, Vashti McKenzie, Clarice Martin, Renita Weems as well as the feminist voices of religious scholars like Christie Neuger, Ellen Davis, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and others in similar studies. For instance, Renita Weems, a noted Old Testament biblical scholar, theologian, educator, womanist, and minister in the AME Church imparts in her writings knowledge about the integration and misinterpretation of scripture that ultimately restrict women.<sup>49</sup>

Neuger and Weems acknowledge that feminists and womanists have sociocultural differences, but both agree and conclude that women leaders can be stymied by the lack of positive attention and the silencing that happens to them by preachers, teachers, and scholars who fail to acknowledge the female presence in the scriptures and interpretations of the biblical text. Weems supports this conclusion by purporting that the womanist finds her voice in the Bible and with respect to the marginalized and oppressed, much like the African American male. Such thinking is also echoed by Vashti McKenzie, a bishop in the AME church.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Renita J. Weems, "Reading Her Way through the Struggle: African American Women in the Bible," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 57–77.

<sup>50</sup> Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without a Struggle: Leadership for African American Women in Ministry*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2011), 946–947, Kindle. Regarding catastrophic social injustices experienced by African Americans she said that the women "did not see themselves as separate from men but as allies with men."

## Business Mentoring Models

Several business mentoring models used for new employees, students, administrators and youth could be adapted for use in women in ministry mentoring models. John Maxwell, a business mentoring expert, captured a simple business mentoring lesson in his mimetic model by following this pattern: First “I do it,” then “I do it, and you watch,” then “You do it, and I watch” and finally, “You do it.”<sup>51</sup> This useful method involves periodic evaluations and systematic accountability. However, some of his other business mentoring suggestions may limit women who participate in an ecclesiastical mentoring model because his model is selective; it includes some and excludes others. For example, he says, “In the case of developing people, you should spend 80 percent of your time developing only the top 20 percent of the people around you.” Further, he believes that mentors should: “Invest your time in people who will give the greatest return.”<sup>52</sup>

These business approaches are driven by financial profit and business productivity and should not be applied to developing a mentoring model for women in ministry. If applied to the Women in Ministry in the AME Central Conference, women would automatically not be invested or even seriously considered because women do not pastor the top 20 percent of the churches and therefore do not get most of the face time with senior leadership.

Women, by most standards, would automatically be left behind and not be considered for mentee opportunities. However, the mere fact that God placed them into ministry indicates that He has already determined their capacities. Ecclesial mentoring must ensure that anyone who

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<sup>51</sup> John C. Maxwell, *Mentoring 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2012), 115–119, Kindle.

<sup>52</sup> Maxwell, *Mentoring 101*, 88–89, 159–160.

aspires to higher leadership is not left behind since ministering impacts people's lives and souls.<sup>53</sup>

Every minister needs a mentor. In having one, no one is left behind, and one generation will successfully transition to the next. Yet, there might be difficulty in pairing the right people together for a mentor-mentee relationship since this is ministry rather than a business. In business, the brightest persons in the group are instinctively selected as mentees. However, in ministry, church leadership under the Holy Spirit's guidance would pair God's servants based on their willingness and heart for ministry, life experiences or other specific needs.

Because women likely experience biased or harsh criticism sometime during their ministerial development process, improper handling of a mentoring program can potentially discourage and/or impede a female ministerial candidate's leadership advancement. John Maxwell provides useful strategies for handling criticism in the workplace.<sup>54</sup> Joseph Folkman observed that effective leaders and professionals "receive feedback as a gift rather than a criticism, and they use it to focus and uncover strengths and work on doing a few things well."<sup>55</sup> Of course, all criticism must be discerned appropriately. Women have a responsibility to speak up for themselves when faced with unfair criticism but handle these situations wisely.

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<sup>53</sup> The AME Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline*, 11371–11374, Kindle. The AME candidates for ordination are reminded by the Ordination Charge minister that pastoral leadership includes responsibility to care for "the sheep of Christ which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood."

<sup>54</sup> John C. Maxwell, "When You Get Kicked in the Rear, You Know You're out in Front," in *Leadership Gold: Lessons I've Learned from a Lifetime of Leading* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 32–40.

<sup>55</sup> Lois J. Zachary and Lory A. Fischler, *The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 2309–2310, Kindle.



Unquestionably, ethical issues must also be addressed when instituting mentorship models in a ministerial context. Dennis J. Moberg and Manuel Velasquez cite several scenarios in business models as contributing to dysfunctional “mentoring” relationships: mismatches between mentor and mentee values, differences in work styles, polarizing personalities, mentors neglecting mentees, mentees’ self-absorption, mentors intentionally excluding mentees from important meetings, lack of interest, manipulative behaviors, mentor incompetence, and serious personal problems.<sup>56</sup>

Even though the above ethical problems are not the usual characteristics of ministers, dysfunctional situations can unconsciously emerge in a ministerial context that will damage the core commitments, values, and goals of a mentor-mentee relationship. These scenarios could be avoided by employing periodic evaluations. The Women in Ministry of the AME Church should assign a mentoring coordinator to act as a resource for keeping mentors and mentees focused. As well, the pairs must covenant to avoid these behaviors using God’s word, loyalty, and confidentiality as the binders to hold each other accountable.

Zachary and Fischler suggest that business mentorships are often brought to closure. These types of relationships are geared towards a particular goal and are then terminated. However, ecclesiastical mentoring is meant to be lifelong for the generational advancement of women ministry. Ecclesiastical mentoring is founded upon and acknowledges God’s “themness” mandate.

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<sup>56</sup> Dennis J. Moberg and Manuel Velasquez, “The Ethics of Mentoring,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (2004): 97, accessed July 28, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/3857774>.

## 5. Conclusion

After considering the concerns of the survey results, the “themness” mandate, biblical, and business models, the Women in Ministry (WIM) mentorship model was developed using the Holy Scriptures as the primary tool and incorporated into a curriculum described in the Appendixes of this paper.<sup>57</sup> The methodology and successful evaluation responses of the curriculum trial run are discussed in the Appendixes.

Until female clergy who hold the few powerful positions designated for women and others in privileged leadership positions begin to seriously understand God’s “themness” intent to include the voices and gifts of women under their leadership, “an imbalanced system” of privileging the few, at the expense of many women, will continue to prevail. Mentorship is not just meant to meet a quota, but to put forth qualified women for the strengthening of the entire church body. Even though the AME church will likely continue ordaining women, without programmatic mentoring many will continue to be idle or leave the church and will provide their valuable gifts to other denominations or venues that will gladly embrace them.

A formalized “grassroots” intentional ecclesiastical mentoring program will help prepare women to excel by supporting each other while working cooperatively with the male colleagues for God’s kingdom. This will bring a fresh look at the “themness” that God intended using the scriptures to shape the mentoring models. More African American female biblical interpreters and scholars are needed to shed light on the scriptures beyond an androcentric and privileged set of lenses currently in operation and in order to restore the voices of the marginalized.

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<sup>57</sup> See Appendixes A and B.

Those who belong to marginalized groups and serve the church as members with greater standing are the individuals who should shoulder the responsibility to restore those on the margins whose voices are suppressed.<sup>58</sup> In this case, that would be female biblical scholars and religious leaders. However, others should not be let off the hook so easily, specifically biblical interpreters of other races, clergy, and church leaders. It is their moral obligation to join in the effort to bring attention to the voices of women on the periphery by being the voice for these voiceless women and by supporting their journeys towards success.

Women's positive stories must be preached more often and in detail from the pulpit for the sake of both clergy and laity. When the "themness" mandate operates fully through ecclesial mentoring, God's transformational truth will be unleashed on men and women producing an equitable balance. This "encouraging and strengthening" mentoring process will ultimately empower present and future generations and cause them to prosper.

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<sup>58</sup> Brian K. Blount, *Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 24. He says, "When the voices of cultures 'from below' take themselves seriously enough to propel themselves into the exegetical, hermeneutical, and interpretative debate, the imperium claimed and held by the dominant cultures is broken." Even though his words are truthful, I would suggest that women should not define themselves with the terminology "from below," but "from the side."

## **Appendix A.**

### Methodology and Mentoring Team Formation

In light of the “themness” mandate and biblical and business mentoring models, the Women in Ministry (WIM) model was developed and incorporated into a curriculum described in Appendix B of this paper.<sup>1</sup> The methodology included the written surveys referenced in Section 2 with the formation of a mentoring team (two AME Presiding Elders and two WIM Coordinators). The mentoring team participants were selected by their tenure and position within the church, the potential to impact many female clergy, positive attitude, diverse achievements, theological training, and willingness. One ordained nondenominational female minister with eighteen years of experience in ministry participated in the survey in a separate trial run of the curriculum to serve as a control.

The women participated in a seven-week curriculum trial run by teleconferences and with YouTube lectures prepared by the facilitator. They were also involved in prayer, free discussions and class activities. At the end of the final session, each team member completed an evaluation and agreed to implement the curriculum for a period of one year with regular check-ins with the facilitator.

Beyond the scope of this project, AME Women in Ministry coordinators will conduct the work of pairing mentors with mentees by drawing upon the women’s strengths. That will allow for exposure to diverse ministries, ages, and church cultures. The completed project will run for a year after this paper submission and will be presented to the local AME Women in Ministry and Board of Examiners for acceptance of the curriculum and future implementation. During that time, we will suggest that a possible Women Studies program to be added to these components.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B

## Survey Results

Table 1. Survey: Demographics

Ministry Status	Number of Responders	Average Years in Ministry	Bachelors Degrees*	Masters Degrees*	Doctoral Degrees*
Itinerant Elders	15	17	3	10	2
Itinerant Deacons	2	8	2	0	0
Licentiates	2	3	0	1	0
Local Deacons	1	21	1	0	0
Presiding Elder	1	27	1	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>

*Source:* Surveys from the Women in Ministry (WIM) meeting, Orlando, 2017 with one survey from a nondenominational participant. \*highest obtained.

Table 2. Survey: Mentoring Information

Ministry Status	Have Female Mentors	Have Male Mentors	Have Male and Female Mentors	Meet at least Monthly with mentors**	Formal mentoring
Itinerant Elders	7	3	2	7	0
Itinerant Deacons	1	0	0	0	0
Licentiates	1	0	0	0	0
Local Deacons	1	0	0	0	0
Presiding Elder	0	1	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>

*Source:* Surveys from the Women in Ministry (WIM) meeting, Orlando, 2017 with one survey from a nondenominational participant. \*\* periodically or as needed

Table 3. Survey: Women’s Challenges in Ministry

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Acceptance of WIM in leadership by congregations  
 AME Appointments – The leaders do not know the women ministers or spend time with them before giving assignments  
 Being placed in churches that cannot pay them a working salary  
 Birthing new churches and being accepted into the local community  
 Communication issues  
 Knowing who we are in Christ Jesus  
 Large churches are unavailable to them, and there is a lack of support from male counterparts; envy  
 The women need to be independent thinkers and don’t isolate themselves  
 Need purpose and to work together; competition  
 Trusting each other  
 Women do not support each other  
 Not being taken seriously by male counterparts  
 Being committed and steadfast in faith  
 Being overlooked for advancement  
 Jealousy and fear of each other  
 Competition, jealousy, separatism

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*Source:* Surveys from the Women in Ministry (WIM) meeting, Orlando, 2017 with one survey from a nondenominational participant.

Table 4. Esteemed Women Ministers: The Characteristics

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Creates great legacy that lives on	Shows strength
Faithfulness in position and anointing for office	Spiritual walk
Depth in preaching of the Word	Desire for academic excellence
Courage, skilled	Trailblazer and determined
Ability to deal with real issues	Displays faith and positivity
Bring relevant spiritual solutions	No fear and leadership qualities
God is seen through her	She keeps it real
Encourages each other to grow in ministries	Teaches others to share
Encourages others to grow to believe in God	Compassionate and determined
Huldah encourager	Determined
Spiritual advisor and motivator	Full of wisdom
Highly educated, powerful preacher	Dedication to teaching
Good bible teacher	Able to stand in adversity

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*Source:* Surveys from the Women in Ministry (WIM) meeting, Orlando, 2017 with one survey from a nondenominational participant.

Table 4. Evaluation Results: Responses from the Mentoring Team’s Curriculum Trial Run

Questions	Participants Responses
<p>Did Series 1 meet your expectations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–This Series gave a great awareness of the need for female clergy to be intentional about mentoring and supporting female clergy. It enlightened me of the missed opportunities we fail to take advantage of—to mentor and support each other.</li> <li>• Yes–Since this was new, I did not know what to expect. However, once the presenter expounded on what will be contained in this series, then my expectations were met.</li> <li>• Yes–Gave a great introduction as to the intent of the mentoring program and how it will line up with the scriptures. The project proposal and its components were clearly laid out.</li> </ul>
<p>Did Series 2 meet your expectations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–This Series helped me to answer the call to mentorship—to initiate opportunities to be a blessing and an encouragement to female clergy. I took action and continue to initiate the skills learned whenever I am in the presence of female clergy. I recently attended a Connectional Evangelism Seminar and was more open to bond with and connect with female pastors and presiding elders in other Episcopal Districts, rather than my usual casual speaking or introductions and moving on without establishing relationships.</li> <li>• Yes, and more. It helped me to take a more serious view of being a mentor.</li> <li>• Yes–The facilitator utilized a good example in the usage of Neuger’s, a feminist, counseling technique for women. It was very skillfully intertwined with the scriptures and Bishop McKenzie’s womanist views.</li> </ul>
<p>Did Series 3 meet your expectations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–I have always admired the Moses and Joshua’s relationship. This series gave me greater insight and appreciation for my Daughters in the Ministry, who are now pastors. They will carry on the anointing and teachings after I am gone, as God uses them to mentor Sons and Daughters under their leadership. Mentorship is expressed as spiritual empowerment which leads to greater kingdom work.</li> <li>• Yes-Although I always saw Moses as Joshua’s mentor, the series helped me to define certain characteristics necessary to strengthen the relationship between mentor and mentee.</li> <li>• Yes–This session was one of my favorite sessions as it bought to life the mentorship between Moses and Joshua. The facilitator exhibited her knowledge and thorough examination of this relationship in order to tie it into her thesis.</li> </ul>

Questions	Participants Responses
Did Series 4 meet your expectations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–Deborah and Barak have always been a misinterpreted relationship. This series heightened a greater understanding of this relationship and gave me a greater appreciation for strong women in leadership. It also gave me the platform to be more dedicated to the call as God’s woman in leadership. Also, to appreciate the position to be able to support male ministers who need the encouragement of strong female leaders.</li> <li>• Yes–I learned so much regarding the relationship between Deborah and Barak.</li> <li>• Yes–This was my “WOW” series as it brought out information that I was not aware of; the knowledge that I enjoyed gaining. Again, utilizing the scriptures, the facilitator tied in biblical applications that joined into the goal of WIM mentoring.</li> </ul>
Did Series 5 meet your expectations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–Series revealed how little data is recorded on some less familiar females in the Bible. This series encouraged me to reveal and include unfamiliar females in my sermons.</li> <li>• Yes–This was a very interesting series, again, information was gained, and it was all because of the facilitator taking it from the Bible and gaining insights that indicate the facilitator had taken time to examine her subject.</li> </ul>
Did Series 6 meet your expectations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–Wow! I received a new revelation regarding the relationship between Mary, her sister Martha, and Jesus. Mary’s relationship with Jesus was very different from that of Martha. Jesus recognized and provided each of the sisters what they needed at the right time especially when Lazarus died.</li> <li>• Yes–Again, great information, well tied into the study’s goal.</li> </ul>
Did Series 7 meet your expectations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–I believe this series was the series that helped me to summarize and bring everything I experienced and learned to a conclusive calling to move forward from A to Z in continuous mentorship of female clergy as well as male clergy. I appreciate the “Themness of God” and celebrate the call of God to be instrumental in bonding with and leading others to higher positions and deeper relationships with God.</li> <li>• Yes–This series tied the previous series together and provided the means to get started becoming a mentor.</li> <li>• Yes–The study’s outline is well defined, and appendixes are appropriate.</li> </ul>



Questions	Participants Responses
Was the instructor's teaching style satisfactory for your understanding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–The instructor's teaching style was excellent. The recorded series were very informative. The instructor was very prepared (well-studied) and organized. Clearly, her Series were very planned with great vision from start to continuance of this great project. The passion was felt, and the passion spilled over to me, as I continue to move forward with enthusiasm and intentionality. No improvements are needed because the recorded sessions were shortened and we held close to our 1-hour designated time.</li> <li>• Yes–The instructor was knowledgeable on the subject, provided excellent resource material, was conscious of time and allowed participants to share their views and gave feedback in a non-threatening way.</li> <li>• Yes–The instructor took into account visual aids and dialogue for various learning style. Additionally, all of the series were the appropriate length of time as to keep the participants interested.</li> </ul>
Did the overall study meet your expectations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, for all the reasons mentioned in each previous section. "Outstanding."</li> <li>• Yes–See notes above.</li> <li>• Yes–The study was well defined and lined out.</li> </ul>
What improvements would you suggest for future study in mentoring or instruction techniques?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was a lot to digest and read in a short time, so in the future, I suggest we stay with the Series information presented and review, reflect and give practical opportunities for greater discussions and personal testimonies that relate to this wonderful Series as we put it into practice.</li> <li>• This technique worked well since the participants lived in various parts of Florida. Especially like the use of YouTube to retrieve information.</li> <li>• At this moment in time, I have no suggestions.</li> </ul>
Has the study prompted you to take action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have taken action as explained in Series 2 section and will continue to be intentional about mentoring.</li> <li>• Yes–I'm currently a mentor, and this series will help tremendously to improve on the techniques I use and will institute going forward.</li> <li>• Yes–The study gave me the feeling of recommitment to mentoring! Some of the concepts introduced through the discussions served as a reminder of the additional purpose we are here for when we look at the concept of mentoring.</li> </ul>
Would you recommend this study for a Mentoring Program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes–I would recommend this study for a Mentoring Program. An excellent job, well done and to be continued. Great things are ahead! This is a much-needed Mentoring Program. Thank you!</li> <li>• Yes–Definitely, for both male and female.</li> <li>• Yes.</li> </ul>

*Source:* Evaluation feedback from the Mentoring Team Participants

## **Appendix B**

### Model WIM Mentoring Plan and Curriculum Synopsis

Introduction

Purpose and Prolegomena

Approach

1. Designate a Mentoring Coordinator (or Team).
2. Plan a one or two-day event to train mentors and possible mentees.
3. Use the curriculum to facilitate the event.
4. Pair the mentors.
5. Agree to confidentiality and respect from this point forward.
6. Mentors and mentees will develop short personal development plans.
7. Agree on meeting schedules and agreement for dealing with relationship difficulties.
8. Perform 6-month evaluations, unless justifiably extending to longer periods.

Teaching Plan for The Two-Day Training

Series 1 – Why is Female Clergy Mentoring Needed

Series 2 – The Call to Mentor

Series 3 – Mentorship: The Prophet Moses and Joshua

Series 4 – Mentorship: The Prophetess Deborah, Mother in Israel and Barak

Series 5 – Mentorship: The Prophetess Huldah: Community and Women

Series 6 – Mentorship: Jesus and Mary of Bethany

Series 7 – Mentorship Preparation

Series 8 – Mentorship implementation, Development and Action Plan

Evaluation and Progress

Progress Increments – Review goals annually and adjust as needed.

## Model Ecclesiastical Mentoring from A to Z

We can now list some key points for the Women in Ministry model from A to Z. While implementing the mentoring plan based on the biblical and business models, the ecclesiastical mentors should model these actions:

Table 6. Model Guidance

A.	Allow mentees to watch them in action; avoid turning the relationship into gripe sessions
B.	Be aware that presence is support.
C.	Communicate scripture clarity and cast visions,
D.	Do not cast insecurities into the relationship but work to overcome them.
E.	Effectively provide reality checks to avoid pedestal expectations.
F.	Firmly, but mutually, realize non-exclusivity and confidentiality.
G.	Guide mentee through commission (ordaining) but maintain a lifelong journey.
H.	Help launch mentee towards their destiny.
I.	Insist on preparation and go into battle with the mentee, if necessary.
J.	Jovially praise when due.
K.	Keep studying and memorializing the legacy together with the mentee.
L.	Let others see what good mentorship looks like by sharing gifts and talents.
M.	Make sure to encourage mentees to use their creative and pioneering imagination, knowing Jesus has their back.
N.	Nurture and encourage mentees to be faithful to God when faced with decisions, even when incompatible with the majority's decisions.
O.	Operate with moral ethics and integrity.
P.	Prepare mentees for the opposition by both genders.
Q.	Quietly provide feedback and prepare mentee for both constructive and unfair criticism.
R.	Require mentees to input resources towards their own security and ministry without fear of waste.
S.	Shun stereotyping.
T.	Try to understand that effective business standards may not work in ministry but glean from its strategies.
U.	Understand that mentors need mentors.
V.	Vehemently keep in mind God's mandate to fulfill God's "themness" intent, and not devise a "female only" but a "themness" agenda.
W.	Weigh out the possibility of mentoring both men and women.
X.	X-out negativity, isolationism, and superiority thoughts.
Y.	Yearn for the right fit in pairing persons with like kindness or experiences.
Z.	Zig with the Holy Spirit when mentorship goes into new directions.

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