
Possible ‘mentoring’ and discipleship in the New Testament – a *propositio*

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Abstract

The primary focus of this article is to research Scriptural perspectives which along the hermeneutical process may indicate some form of “mentoring” as it is known today. Although “mentoring” is not mentioned as such and the concept did not exist, New Testament perspectives may indicate something similar to which is currently viewed as “mentoring”. In this article certain New Testament figures were identified which acted as these possible “mentors” to others. These mentor figures are: Jesus as a mentor to his disciples and Paul as a mentor to Timothy, Titus and Onesimus. The disciples were chosen because they walked closely with Jesus and became God’s faithful servants. Paul was chosen for his designed strategy for evangelism. His possible “mentoring” role to his mentees (Timothy, Titus, Onesimus) was evidently successful.

In conclusion the process of possible “mentoring” is reflected on by looking at the outstanding and dedicated lives of the followers and recommendations.

Opsomming

Die primêre fokus van die artikel is om Skriftuurlike perspektiewe in die Nuwe Testament na te vors wat langs die weg van die hermeneutiese proses mag dui op 'n vorm van mentorskap soos dit vandag bekend staan. Alhoewel mentorskap nie spesifiek so genoem word nie en die konsep nie bestaan het nie, kan Nuwe Testamentiese perspektiewe moontlik dui op iets soortgelyk as wat huidig as mentorskap beskou word. In hierdie artikel word sekere Nuwe Testamentiese figure geïdentifiseer wat as moontlike “mentors” teenoor ander opgetree het. Hierdie mentor-figure is Jesus as 'n mentor vir sy dissipels en Paulus, 'n mentor vir Timotheus, Titus en Onesimus. Die dissipels is gekies omdat hulle baie naby Jesus geleef het en God se getroue dienaars geword het. Paulus is gekies vir sy strategie met betrekking tot die verkondiging van die evangelie. Sy rol as moontlike mentor vir sy mentees (Timotheus, Titus, Onesimus) was klaarblyklik suksesvol. Ten slotte word daar oor die proses van moontlike mentorskap nagedink deur te kyk na die uitstaande en toegewyde lewens van die volgelinge en sekere aanbevelings gemaak.

1. Introduction

The argument of this article will be to propose that what is today called “mentoring” may have been to a large extent the practice in the New Testament in the training and teaching of disciples and other followers. The origin of mentoring and the concept of a “mentor” can somehow be understood when viewing the Greek mythology. Odysseus was a Greek combatant, who fought in the Trojan War and left his son in the hands of someone he trusted (confidant), who was called Mentor. The war lasted for ten years and it took Odysseus another ten years to return home. When Odysseus finally returned, he found that his son, Telemachus, was fully mature and had become a person with good values, due to the influence of Mentor. According to this interpretation, a mentor is someone who has an immediate or direct influence on someone's life; it is for this reason that the concept of mentoring has received attention and been developed throughout the ages

(Freeks, 2013:32; Steytler, 2007:12; Fourie & Van den Berg, 2007:94-95; Hendricks & Hendricks, 1995:17-18). Accepting this theory can of course not be done “in a straight line” as if what was written in the New Testament can be accepted per se, but only by keeping in mind the very important principles of hermeneutics (cf. Jordaan, Janse van Rensburg & Breed, 2011:226).

According to Dan G. McCartney who presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2003 (McCartney, 2003:1) we should ask the question of historical meaning, for at least three reasons:

- (1) Inasmuch as Christianity is a historical religion and founded on the events which God has done in the past, the historical meaning, the meaning it would have had the first time the text was read, is religiously important.
- (2) Paying attention to the text’s cultural and historical context is important because as human creatures we communicate in certain ways that depend on our contexts.
- (3) Our professional vocation as Biblical scholars means that we must work in a context of discipline, and grammatical-historical interpretation, which attempts to ask more narrowly defined questions about meaning in original historical contexts, preserves both the disciplined nature of what we do (science), and the rootedness of our faith in history.

It is therefore imperative to not only take cognizance of the context of the history in any document which had been written (and in this case the *Sitz im Leben* of the New Testament), but also the **current** context in which the application is made. This article will pursue the “then” context and along hermeneutical principles apply the matter to the “now” context (*in casu*: “mentoring”).

Mentoring

It seems that the concept and application of “mentoring” has not only been growing in the world “out there” but also within the church and church leadership (Lewis, 2009: Foreword). Lotter (2010:6) focuses on the growing importance of “mentoring” as being used in many different situations and spheres of life like for instance the business world, the church environment, higher education and other kinds of training, ranging from the very mundane to the most sophisticated forms of “mentoring”. Within the last fourteen years, a renewed interest in both “mentoring” and coaching have arisen (Collins, 2001:16; McDermott & Jago 2006:18). The interest has focused on business people (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2000:14) while leaders in

church and the corporate world (Canfield, 2005:299; Wright, 2006:13) also applied “mentoring”. Coaching (besides “mentoring”) has also lately been used in churches (Comiskey, Scaggs & Wong, 2010:26).

According to the above-mentioned authors, “mentoring” is a two-way process where both mentor (leader) and mentee (follower) learn to understand one another and a relationship through which the mentor (leader) invests time and help the mentee (follower) to reach his or her potential. Mentoring is the support and encouragement to people so that they can manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be (cf. MentorSET, 2008). The mentor is a guide who helps the mentee to find the right direction. Mentors have empathy with the mentee and also an understanding of their issues. Mentors help mentees to believe in themselves and they boost their confidence (cf. MentorSET, 2008). In the context of this article the possible “mentor” (leader) is interested and motivated to help the mentee (follower) because the “mentor” is that someone who allows the mentee to see the hope inside him-/herself through their guidance, motivation, inspiration and support so that the mentee (follower) can achieve his/her life's goals. According to Freeks (2011:53-54; Pue, 2008:16 – 18 and Lotter, 2010:6) mentors usually do some of the following (and this is also applicable to the New Testament possible “mentors” who will be discussed):

- They help people to learn the basics of walking with Christ (**discipler**).
- They help people to learn how to mature in depth in their Christian life (**spiritual guide**).
- They help people to learn to do things (**coach**).
- They help people by giving wise advice to help them through difficult situations (**counselor**).
- They help people to learn essential ideas and get perspectives (**teacher**).

“Mentoring” is therefore a supportive, learning relationship between an individual – the mentor – who shares his or her knowledge, experience and insights with another less experienced person. It therefore takes time and endurance, as Pue (2008:13) aptly indicates when writing about the process of “mentoring” of the disciples and developing leaders (which is the same thing): “Jesus didn’t do it in a weekend!”

The Latin word *propositio* used in the title can be three things. First, it can be a notion or image. Secondly, it can be a proposition, premise or case for discussion, which is the appropriate and chosen meaning in the context of

this article. Thirdly it can be a statement of facts or a case (Anon., 1982). The second meaning is accepted here for the purposes of the article.

The New Testament and possible “mentorship”

It was pointed out and proved by Freeks (2011:34-44) that what today is called “mentoring” was in a way illustrated by some leaders in the Old Testament. In the New Testament there were leaders who also displayed some forms of possible “mentorship” as we know it today. They acted as teachers, guides and persons to the best of their ability, in a compassionate way in plain view of the mentee (cf. Bell, 2002:xiv). Even within families the practice which is today known as “mentoring”, was in some way applied where sons learnt (and were guided by their fathers) their *vocations* and *role in public life* from their fathers and daughters learnt from their mothers what they should be doing at *home* (cf. Bartchy, 1998:282-283; Larney, 2009:37).

Osiek (1998:287-290) gives an extended description of the situation in the early Christianity regarding the family life, relations therein and the place of the family in society. It lies beyond the scope of this article to discuss these matters in depth, but provides a broad frame from which parent and children relationship (also regarding guidance and tutoring) may be understood.

The focus will now be on certain Biblical figures, specifically their background, history and the possible “mentoring” role to their “mentees”. These Biblical figures are Jesus Christ, a mentor to His disciples and Paul, a mentor to Timothy, Titus and Onesimus. The researcher chose these leaders (mentors¹) because they were able to invest time in somebody else’s future and they had the perseverance to encourage and build the follower (mentee²).

The Lord Jesus Christ was not only a mentee (cf. Luke 2:51), but He was the ultimate leader and possible “mentor” to those He later possibly mentored and is still today in a spiritual way a possible “mentor” to many. He is the perfect model for “mentorship” and the main character of the Gospels and God’s representative promised by the Bible. Jesus Christ demonstrates the stories of possible “mentors” such as Jacob (Israel) going down to Egypt, Moses leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, and David ruling over the people as God’s anointed king (cf. Dunn & Rogerson, 2003:1037; Ray, 2001:332-333). The best example set by Jesus Christ was that of a *servant* (cf. Mk 10:45) and *teacher* (Jn 13:13). The essence of Jesus Christ’s possible “mentoring” was displayed in the relationship with His disciples. The message that came

1 The word “mentor” is a term that is used today.

2 The word “mentee” is a term that is used today.

through under His discipling and leadership was love and service (Jn 13:15). Even today the Lord Jesus Christ invites everybody to follow Him and to learn from Him (cf. Mt 11:28-30). Following Jesus Christ in the 21st century will of course mean many other things than it meant for the first disciples and be applied in completely different settings than those of the New Testament *Sitz im Leben*. In current life and world views these adaptations should be made in a valid way and also reflected in academic ventures, while old fashioned patterns should be revisited and evaluated within radical new contexts and challenges.

A good portrayal of this is found in The Maxwell Leadership Bible (2007:1617) where John Maxwell – a well-known American leader in business development – uses the following examples from the New Testament with regard to mentoring:

- Jesus assesses disciples, Matthew 17:14-21
- Twelve, not twelve hundred, Luke 6:12-19
- Paul developed leaders, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8
- Paul and Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:9-21.

The disciples who struggled with their inadequate faith became the greatest men who spread the gospel over the world (Mt 17:18-20, cf. Dunn & Rogerson 2003:1039). This constitutes a vital feature of all the Gospel narratives (Mt, Mk, Lk & Jn).

Paul was chosen because he is one of the prominent authors and leader figures in the New Testament, also by his example of spiritual strength (Lotter, 1995:550). He established many churches and this establishment of churches was evidently successful because of his leadership and possible “mentoring” role (Gl 1:14, Phlp 3:6). Paul was the suitable possible mentor who took the gospel to the Gentiles (Gl 1:15-16; 2:7-8) and he was not only a possible mentor to three great leaders in the Bible, such as Timothy, Titus and Onesimus, but also an outstanding example of someone who was himself possibly mentored by Barnabas (cf. Ac 11:25-26). Because Paul was a possible “mentor” to Timothy, Timothy’s faith was strengthened and he could also teach other men about God (2 Th 2:2). The same happened to Titus, who was a person who spread the gospel and became an emissary of the churches. Onesimus, the runaway slave, was the perfect example of humility, who was also one of Paul’s “mentees” (Col 4 and 9, cf. also Phlp 1:8-21).

2. Jesus Christ

2.1 *His history and background*

In the discussion of Jesus Christ and the role He played, a short note will be given on His Name and the meaning thereof. The name “Jesus” means the Lord “saves” (salvation) (Wardlaw, 2007:7). The name Christ has the meaning as the Hebrew term Messiah, and it means “anointed” (God’s anointed One) (Wright, 1996:477-481; Hare, 1993:5-6).

About Jesus’ childhood there is little to be read in the Bible, only that He grew up as a child to become an adult, live a pure life to fulfil His mission (cf. *inter alia* Luke 2:41-52)

The New Testament describes his calling as the Messiah and to do God’s work until He was crucified and died on Calvary (Van der Walt, 2006:129; cf. Seamands, 2003:25-28).

According to Seccombe (2002:90-91) the mission of Jesus Christ the Messiah was to fulfil the law and the prophets which are reflected first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament (cf. Mt 5:17; Lubeck, 2001:332-333). At Jesus’ birth the angel told Joseph and Mary that He would be called “Immanuel” which means “God with us” (Wardlaw, 2007:9; Mendenhall, 2001:42; cf. Mt 1:23). His identity is stated unambiguously by the voice from heaven which addressed Him at his baptism, “You are my beloved Son ...” (Mk 1:11) and proclaimed on the mountain of transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him” (Mk 9:7; Matt. 1:1-17; cf. Hare, 1993:8). Seccombe (2002:601) (cf. Carson, France, Motyer & Wenham, 1998:905) implies that the task that was given to Jesus Christ at His baptism was to establish the Kingdom of God and extend its authority to the ends of the earth. He is the One in whom God is perfectly revealed, He is the King Messiah, and although God is King, Jesus Christ represented Him and would represent Him in the coming kingdom. He rendered service to others instead of receiving it from them and is called the Good Shepherd (cf. Carson *et al.*, 1998:904-905; Clements, 2003:11-54). Jesus Christ also demonstrated that humble service is the highest honour (Seccombe, 2002:90-91; cf. Sherman, 2004:116-117).

Jesus Christ is the central figure to Christians and His life fulfilled the promises of God which were made by the Old Testament prophets about the manifestation of God in the lives of humans (Wardlaw, 2007:7; cf. Lubeck, 2001:332-333). He also is the founder of Christianity and his life is known from the four Gospels (Cohn-Sherbok, 1998:150). The narrative of Jesus

Christ is paramount and relevant because it is told four times over in the New Testament and that is why He can be acclaimed the God-man regardless of His physical or human nature (Riches, 2006:485-486; Lubeck, 2001:332; Hagner, 1993:6-7).

Jesus Christ is today the central figure to Christians and His main purpose was to build God's Kingdom on earth. In establishing God's Kingdom on earth He used His teachings and sermons as part of a possible "mentoring" process to His disciples. Today, He can even in a spiritual way, be a possible "mentor" figure to many who want to be His followers.

3. Discipleship and the disciples of Jesus Christ

3.1 *Discipleship*

The term *disciple* within the New Testament was generally used in the Gospels and also Acts to refer to the wider group of the followers of Jesus Christ and not only to a specific group. According to Hull (2006:24) "Discipleship isn't just *one* of the things the church does; it *is* what the church does. Every time when someone "followed" Jesus Christ in the Gospel, he/she served as an example of what discipleship should be like (Huizenga, 2008:405).

3.2 *The history of the disciples and their background*

The twelve disciples were those chosen by Jesus Christ and remained with the Lord throughout his earthly ministry. They were distinguished from the unnamed disciples who followed Jesus Christ and who played a prominent role in Luke and Acts (Robertson, 2005:273). They later became the Messianic ambassadors of Jesus Christ. "Apostolos" means representative of a sending person (Lk 6:31) and denotes the agent that is sent to act on his behalf (Seccombe, 2002:247).

The word disciple is derived from a Latin word *discipulus* that means learner/student (Van der Walt, 2006:161; cf. Vincent, 2007:326-330). All the disciples came from Galilee, a place and province that the Jews generally looked down on (Van der Walt, 2006:164). Jesus Christ selected the disciples to be permanently in his presence, to be his mouthpieces and become the ultimate leaders of the continued ministry (Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:12-16; cf. Seccombe, 2002:248). According to Huizenga (2008:405) the Gospel of Mark is the most elaborate in its portrayal of the disciples (cf. also Vincent, 2005:155-159).

The fidelity of Jesus Christ and the sometimes faithlessness and frailty of his chosen disciples are evident when time and time again the disciples

displayed dullness, fear and pride, while the Lord calls for and exemplifies understanding, faith and sacrificial service (Van der Walt 2006:164). The disciples whom Jesus had chosen (Mk 3:13-19) had different careers. Most of them were fishermen and one a tax collector (Levi) (cf. Van der Walt, 2006:164). It is significant that these disciples came from all walks of life and social standings and this is perhaps a vision of the way the church later became structured representing all kinds of people without any distinction.

Most of these disciples left everything and travelled with nothing, only the clothes they wore and still followed Jesus Christ, without any expectation of making a living and earning a livelihood (cf. Spencer, 2005:145, 152; Seccombe, 2002:401-402). It was of course a great sacrifice for anyone to offer-up all means of material earnings. The effect of journeying without food or money was that they became totally dependent on God's provision (cf. Mt 6:25-34 & Mt 7:7-11).

According to Robertson (2005:276-278) four outstanding points may play a significant role in the lives of the disciples:

First they exercised a ministry of proclamation and power to which they were earlier commissioned but often failed in (cf. Lk 9; Ac 2:14-36, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 5:29-32). Secondly it is clear that the power behind the Twelve is the Holy Spirit and it is the same Spirit who had anointed and empowered the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ac 2:7, 2:12, 4:13; Lk 21:12-15, 21:14). Thirdly the twelve disciples experienced great results in their mission and their devotion (cf. Ac 2:47, 5:14, 2:42-44, 4:32) and fourthly they preached and also performed miraculous signs in Jerusalem (cf. Ac 1:8, 2:46, 3:1, 5:42; Lk 24:49, 53). Although there was no job description or plan of action for the twelve disciples, they responded individually and uniquely to their own calling, when Jesus Christ had made a paramount statement of: "*I will make you fishers of people*" (Spencer, 2005:144; cf. Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17). They became Jesus Christ's audience and faithful servants in spite of their failures and disappointments (Mt 5:11-16; Mk 4:21, 9:50; Lk. 6:22-23, 8:16, 14:34-35; cf. Carson *et al.*, 1998:911). Jesus Christ indicated to the disciples that they were in God's service and not in the service of Antipas or the Roman-Galilean empires (cf. Spencer, 2005:145). It seems almost as if the disciples were following the Lord blindly because He led his followers on a homeless course, with no place to lay down their heads. Jesus Christ however referred to them as his true family, those who were seated around Him, who were doing the will of God (Huizenga, 2008:406; Spencer, 2005:152; Williamson, 1983:85; cf. Mk 3:34-35, 4:3-9).

Those (disciples) around Him (Jesus) were given the mystery which is the truth, and the truth is for insiders, not outsiders, in other words those who walk with Him, stay close to and follow Him (Huizenga, 2008:406). A very difficult situation for the disciples was to move to Jerusalem to fulfil a ministry and to deal with problems in a relational system that was outside their own experience. Many times their lives were at stake (Robertson, 2005:289).

It is evident that the disciples became the mouth pieces of Jesus Christ and great leaders through His possible "mentoring" process. Although they displayed failures, fear and disappointment in many instances, they became Jesus Christ's faithful servants.

3.3 Jesus Christ a possible "mentor" to His disciples

According to Crow (2008:87-99; cf. also Lottes, 2005:128) Jesus Christ is mentioned in the New Testament as a possible "mentor" figure by the Gospel writers. The Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John selected episodes and sayings from the very life of Jesus Christ that would serve as "mentoring" encouragement in each of their contexts. Jesus Christ implemented a humble "mentoring" approach as portrayed in the narrative of John 13 (the washing of the disciples' feet) about his unique approach as a servant teacher where he also prepared his disciples to lead a new messianic community (Belsterling, 2006:78-80).

According to Seccombe (2002:247) the disciples had an elementary education because they were quite capable of memorising Jesus Christ's sayings and parables. In this way Jesus Christ was a possible "mentoring" figure to them. He chose and trained them to transmit His teachings to others (cf. Camille, 2005:43-45).

The humble example and lesson of Jesus Christ was not necessarily provided to the disciples for them to comprehend fully at the moment. The Lord was very much concerned with the long-term impact and results (Belsterling, 2006:85). Jesus Christ was discipling His disciples and also "mentoring" them as was indicated above. A suitable example is found in Matthew 28:19 where He said: "make disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" implying that we (even today) are to make disciples who could make disciples and who could in their turn make other disciples (Crow, 2008:89). Hull (2006:25) in his major contribution toward discipleship titled *The complete book of Discipleship* drives the same point when he states: "Discipleship ranks as God's top priority because Jesus practices it and commanded us to do it, and his followers continued it."

Note should also be taken of the interrelatedness with the training of rabbis, connected to the discipling done by Jesus Christ and what is described in this article as possible “mentoring”, as Lewis (2009:52) explained:

*Although the language of ‘mentoring’ was not around in Jesus’ time, in some respects **rabbinical schools operated like possible “mentoring” networks** (italics by authors). If you had asked any of the Twelve what sort of relationship they were in with Jesus, they would most likely have told you that he was a rabbi and they were his disciples. This was the language with which they were familiar. And yet, Jesus reinterpreted the traditional role of a rabbi in ways that sometimes surprised his contemporaries.*

According to Reid (2009:45) while Jesus Christ was busy possible “mentoring” and leading His disciples they were quarreling amongst each other over who was the greatest in the Kingdom of God. He explained and directed His disciples’ attention to those who are most vulnerable and whose gifts were undervalued and least developed. Jesus Christ addressed His disciples and invited them to a leadership style based on relinquishment and service to all, especially the ones in need. He practiced what He preached about the inclusive love of God (cf. Lottes, 2005:137).

Jesus Christ emphasised the necessity of self-sacrifice instead of self-praise and therefore explained this to the disciples after their argument about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ told them “whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all”. For, even the Son of Man came not to be served but to “serve” (Huizenga, 2008:409; cf. Gundry-Volf, 1999:57-58; Mk 10:43-45). The Lord here used a child to show and explain to the disciples some virtues such as love, compassion and so invested value in their lives (cf. Gundry-Volf, 1999:59-60).

The term “mentor” according to Belsterling (2006:77-78) is never used in Scripture but the Greek term, “meno” which means “enduring relationship”, does occur in the Bible. Jesus Christ used the term frequently in His farewell discourse and it describes an abiding relationship especially the type of relationship that He desired with His twelve disciples (cf. Köstenberger, 2004; Jn 14,15). The Lord desired to love and counsel His disciples in this way so that He viewed the disciple-teacher relationship as an enduring one. An example of a very close and relational way of leading and “mentoring” was the fact that Jesus Christ washed the disciples’ feet. To them it was humiliating but to Jesus Christ it portrayed the ultimate humiliation He was to suffer on the cross (Thomas, 2000:28-29; Belsterling, 2006:80-81, cf. Jn 13:1-17). He used the foot-washing as an object lesson to teach His disciples that

loving others means humbly serving them as He even laid aside his dignity (Belsterling, 2006:84). This shows that Jesus Christ possibly “mentored” the disciples to be humble and encouraged them to love in humility and make sacrifices for one another. His love for His “protégés” was enduring (cf. Jn 13:1). Discipleship is therefore taught by word and deed meaning one must see to follow and follow to see (Huizenga, 2008:408).

Belsterling (2006:78) said that Jesus Christ protected the twelve and retreated with them from the masses of other disciples who followed Him. This indicates that the relationship that Jesus Christ had with the Twelve was at a more intimate level than that which He had with all others (cf. Jn 6; Lk 8). Jesus Christ was not in any way “chosen” or “elected” as possible “mentor” by the disciples, but He chose them to lead and nurture them with respect and love (cf. Köstenberger, 2004; Köstenberger & O’Brien, 2001:91-94). Jesus was faithful even when He had an intense psychological struggle in Gethsemane but He yielded to the will of God. The disciples, however, did not. They fled (cf. Mk 14:50-52) but still they held a special place in His heart and He was about to lay down His life for them (Huizenga, 2008:410; Belsterling, 2006:83). Although the twelve neglected and rejected Him, He was still passionate to lead and to guide them until the very end (Seccombe, 2002:601). It can therefore be deducted that Jesus had a tremendous “mentoring” influence on his disciples by unleashing their potential and allowing them to become the best they could be in their service of God, also in “mentoring” and teaching others about the Kingdom of God, making disciples (followers) of Christ and most importantly to serve (servanthood).

4. Paul

4.1 *His history and background*

The name “Paul” is of Greek origin (Paulos). His original name was Saul (Cohn-Sherbok 1998:234; cf. Ac 13:9). Apparently his parents gave him the Hebrew name Saul in honour of King Saul, who was also of the tribe of Benjamin and also in honour of the Roman proconsul. Paul was born in the Greek city of Tarsis, a very prosperous and renowned centre of both education and philosophy in the region of Cilicia in southern Asia Minor (Melick, 1991:47). Although Paul was the leading persecutor of Christians and of the church of God and was trying to destroy it, he became a believer in Jesus (Ac 21:39; Gl 1:13; Köstenberger & O’Brien, 2001:161-164; Carson *et al.* 1998:1115; O’Brien 1982:180-181; cf. Ac 21:39, Gl 1:13), a freeborn citizen of Rome (Ac 22:25, 28).

When Paul was still a youth, his family moved to Jerusalem where he was educated and had a strict religious training (Ac 22:3; Phlp 3:3). Paul's Pharisaic roots led him to study with one of the leading teachers of the time, Gamaliel, the elder, who was the grandson of the great Hillel who was the leading Jewish teacher of the first century BC (Mitchell, 1992:641-662; Daube, 1986:40-43; Winter, 1984:203-212; Goodenough, 1929:181-183; cf. Gal. 1:14). Besides being an educated man, Paul also learned the craft of tent-making as a trade in order to support his study of the Law (cf. Ac 18:3).

Paul was not only a great missionary and church builder but also a dynamic preacher and gifted writer. Of the 27 books of the New Testament he was the author of 14 (Ac 13:16-41, 17:22-31). Paul believed that the work God had given him to do was to plant churches in strategic places through which the gospel could be proclaimed (Rm 15:19; cf. Carson *et al.*, 1998:1115). Thus for the sake of the gospel Paul suffered shame and the pain of imprisonment, but could still lead and "mentor" individuals such as Timothy, Titus and Onesimus (Magee, 2008:338-353; cf. Hiebert, 1976:213).

Paul displayed a significant way of following Christ by suffering severe pain and shame for the sake of the gospel and still endured as a great missionary and possible "mentor" figure to many.

5. Timothy

5.1 His history and background

The name "Timothy" means "honoured of God", "worshipping God" or "valued of God" and he was the child of a godly mother (Cohn-Sherbok, 1998:294; Mitchell, 1992:653; cf. Ac 16:1; 2 Tm 1:5). He was born in a religiously divided household, with a Jewish mother and a Greek father and although he was not circumcised as a Jewish boy, he was strongly influenced by the deep faith in God by his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois (Houston, 2004:229; cf. 2 Th 1:5-7).

Timothy was a young man from Lystra in southern Asia Minor who became one of Paul's principal aides, a youthful reader of Scripture and ordained for the work of preaching (2 Th 3:15). He was Paul's most responsible associate and helped nurture the small far-flung congregations of believers around the Greek world, and became a co-sufferer with Paul in the afflictions of the gospel (Couser, 2004:295-316; Mitchell, 1992:641-662; Hiebert, 1976:213-228; cf. 2 Th 1:8).

5.2 Paul a possible “mentor” to Timothy

Paul was the great apostle to the Gentiles and a great leader and possible “mentor” to Timothy, Titus and Onesimus (Magee, 2008:338-353; cf. Hiebert, 1976:213).

Paul recognised Timothy’s abilities, and a close bond of faith and affection developed between them. He spoke of Timothy as his beloved and faithful child (1 Cor 4:17; cf. Hiebert, 1976:215). Through the “mentoring” process of Paul Timothy was encouraged not to be ashamed of the gospel and testimony for Jesus Christ (Couser, 2004:295-296). Paul possibly “mentored” important characteristics to Timothy and was using Timothy as an emissary to nurture congregations when Paul could not himself visit them (Houston, 2004:231-233).

He was sent to the Thessalonians to strengthen their faith and exhort them (cf. 1 Th 3:1-36), to Philippi because he took an interest in their welfare (cf. Phlp 2:20, 22) and to Corinth to remind them of Paul’s ways which he adopted by following Christ (cf. 1 Cor 4:17). Some of the valuable moral traits and virtues Paul mentioned and possibly mentored to Timothy was to implement aspects such as sensibility, self-restraint, vigilance, orderliness, hospitality, teach ability, good reputation, etc. (Mappes, 2003:207-212; cf. Hughes, 1999:104-207). Timothy was assisted and led by Paul till the end to be just, even when judgement was to be passed on him (Couser, 2004:311).

6. Titus

6.1 His history and background

The name “Titus” means “honourable” or “honour” and comes from the Greek “Titos” (Mitchell, 1992:647). Titus was the first Gentile (being a young Greek) to become one of the apostle Paul’s co-workers in spreading the gospel of Jesus. Titus became like Timothy, an important emissary in dealing with congregations that the apostle could not visit. Titus was taken to Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas for a conference with the leaders of the church (Lea & Griffin, 1992:263-264).

6.2 Paul a possible “mentor” to Titus

Paul and Titus did not yield to the false brothers not even for a moment (Gl 2:4, 5) and Titus was an inspiration to Paul (cf. Gl 2:1-3). The relationship between Paul and Titus has been described by Paul himself in 2 Cor 7 and 8. Just like with Timothy a peculiar bond of affection developed between Paul

and Titus (cf. 2 Cor 7:6, 13). Paul described him as his partner and fellow-worker and true child in a common faith (cf. 2 Cor 8:23).

While Paul was possibly “mentoring” Titus he gave him the challenging task to deal with the church at Corinth. With the leadership and values of Paul Titus became successful in combating false teaching and in repairing the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians (Genade, 2011:19-20; cf. 2 Cor 7:5-6). According to Mappes (2003:205-208) Paul inspired Titus to set things straight by ordaining elders in every city, avoiding unprofitable discussions and asserting his authority .

7. Onesimus

7.1 His history and background

Onesimus is a Greek name which means “useful” and “profitable” (Phlm 11; Mitchell, 1992: 652; Dunn & Rogerson, 2003:1447). Although Onesimus was a slave Paul refers to him as the faithful and beloved brother (Melick, 1991:338; Daube, 1986:41; Col 4:9). The runaway slave was from Philemon’s household and as he escaped, it was detected that he had defrauded his Christian master by robbing him (Nordling, 1997:263; Winter, 1984:203; cf. Col 4).

As fugitive he became Paul’s valued helper and companion and Paul regarded him as his child and beloved brother and Paul even had to stand in for the lost money (Nordling, 1997:274; Goodenough, 1929:183; cf. Phlm 10, 16). Paul entertained a fugitive slave, and in accordance with the law Paul allowed this shrewd slave to remain with him for a time to become converted to Christianity (Mitchell, 1992:651-652; Daube, 1986:40-43; cf. also Goodenough, 1929:183).

According to Dunn and Rogerson (2003:1447) Onesimus had deliberately sought Paul out in prison because Onesimus had offended his master Philemon and wanted Paul to intercede on his behalf. When Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon he clearly expected Onesimus to accept patiently whatever decision Philemon would make (Daube, 1986:41).

Paul set an example of self-restraint because he beseeched instead of ordering and appealed to love and partnership. One could say the approach of Paul was sincere and humble towards Onesimus (Daube, 1986:41).

7.2 Paul a possible “mentor” to Onesimus and Philemon

Paul had fathered Onesimus in prison (Phlm10) in a spiritual sense and this was Paul's main reason why he expected Philemon to welcome Onesimus as a fellow-Christian, a brother in Christ (Phlm10-11, 1:16, 17). The pressing need of Onesimus was to get himself-reinstated with his master and after a while he persuaded Paul, while Paul observed it by himself, that he was a changed man. This moved Paul to go to great lengths of writing his letter to Philemon in all sincerity, appealing to Philemon to let go of his wrath against Onesimus because the slave was now a brother in Christ. He urged him to receive him not as a slave but as a brother (Nordling, 1997:282; Daube, 1986:40; Winter, 1984:205; Goodenough, 1929:183; cf. Col 4, 9).

Onesimus' conversion was a complete change because the very person that was once subject to Philemon was no more. The present Onesimus was a different being in every respect and Paul's guidance; possible “mentoring” and leadership played a role in this process (Daube, 1986:41).

Onesimus – now a fellow-Christian – discovered new faith and Paul was not only a possible “mentor” and leader to him but also a possible “mentor” and leader to Philemon. Philemon was enlightened by the truth of which Paul spoke and what he taught – Paul had the Christian freedom of Philemon in mind (Nordling, 1997:277; Winter, 1984:204-206).

8. Proposed recommendations

From the research above the following recommendations can be made:

- The features and characteristics of leadership and parenthood in the early Christianity should be understood properly in any scholarly dealing with the issue of “possible mentoring” as it is currently understood.
- It is imperative to use a valid hermeneutical process in order to understand what had been written in the New Testament and how it may be applied in the current age.
- Regular guidance and tuition in an informal and family context constituted “possible mentoring” throughout the ages and especially in early Christianity as was shown in this article.
- That current scholarly activity should take serious cognizance of the Biblical material with regard to business and human resources models being used today.

- Management and other human resource principles may be deducted from the Bible as was done in this article provided that a valid process of hermeneutical interpretation is followed.
- Continued studies should be conducted in order to still apply Biblical principles by way of scientific and valid research toward the present day context.
- Mentoring as a “modern” development should not only be studied from a recent view point but also from a Biblical origin.
- Methods related and overlapping with mentoring like *inter alia* coaching should also be studied from a Biblical perspective.

9. Conclusion

General conclusion

Apart from the specific results of the investigation of Biblical figures regarding “mentoring”, the following general conclusions can be drawn:

- The Bible may be taken seriously even today with regard to certain social forms which had been practiced ages ago.
- With scientific and valid hermeneutical interpretation and application it can be shown that what had been written in Biblical times may still be relevant today albeit in a changed format.
- “Mentoring” as it is known currently has its origins already in New Testament times.
- Description of common human relationships between the more experienced and less experienced persons had not changed throughout the ages.
- It is safe to say that what is today named and practiced as “mentoring”, may be a variant of what had been observed in New Testament times.

Specific conclusions

In this article it has been indicated that from New Testament perspectives something similar to what is currently known as “mentoring” had been practiced. As an introduction a description of current “mentoring” was done. Certain New Testament figures who had thus been identified, served as possible “mentors” to their “mentees”. The focus was on leaders (possible “mentors”) who made an impact on their followers (mentees). They were

Jesus Christ, a possible “mentor” to His disciples, and Paul, a possible “mentor” to Timothy, Titus and Onesimus. These possible mentor figures showed outstanding leadership and possible “mentorship” abilities. In the discussion of those who acted as possible “mentors” and the role they played in the lives of these mentees, the significance of discipling (as a form of “mentoring”) in the New Testament was highlighted.

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Key concepts

**New Testament
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mentee
mentoring**

Kernbegrippe

**Nuwe Testament
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mentor
mentee
mentorskap**