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MENTORING IN KAIROS

Within an educational philosophy that begins and ends with discipleship, the mentor team is central in importance. Mentoring captures the essence of apprenticeship – engaging students in real-time contextual learning, in conjunction with high-quality theoretical and practical content.

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MENTORING AS DISCIPLESHIP

Mentors and mentor teams are a core aspect of everyone's journey through Kairos. It is one of six principles of CBTE. We refer to this principle as "mentored teamwork," and you can read what we say about that principle here. In the article, we note:

"Kairos invites each member of the team to see himself or herself as a sojourner, co-learner, and disciple of Jesus. As a team, they are shaping, evaluating, and experiencing a journey of discipleship that is informed by the context and vocation of the student…Each member of the team is engaged in a journey of discipleship, each member is learning together."

Within an educational philosophy that begins and ends with discipleship, the mentor team is central in importance. Mentoring captures the essence of apprenticeship – engaging students in real-time contextual learning, in conjunction with high-quality theoretical and practical content. The result is a graduate whose capacities in content, character, and craft have been expanded, equipping them to be faithful followers of Jesus who flourish within their vocations as participants in the Kingdom movement. In simple terms, mentors make us better – better students, better leaders, better followers, better ambassadors for the gospel.

Mentoring also reproduces what's invested: Having received from others before them, mentors entrust to faithful people what they hope will be passed on to others (2 Timothy 2:2; Philippians 4:9). Content, character, and craft are all reproducible. The materials and learning processes within Kairos are meant to equip followers of Jesus who will pour themselves into others for the sake of the gospel. The ultimate goal of the mentoring relationship within a learning environment centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ is to multiply exponentially as we join God on mission. Jesus preached to a crowd, he called and sent twelve, and he invested himself most intimately with three. By the time of Acts 1, the number of gathered disciples was 120 (Acts 1:15). Less than two months later, the church had over 3,000. Mentoring multiplies.

Mentoring also makes a student's educational experience three-dimensional. It's no longer about finishing a certain number of courses, passing tests, and getting grades. It's about walking with others who will help students develop and demonstrate proficiency while being held accountable for their own personal and professional growth. It's about celebrating what students already know while inviting students and mentors to grow deeper in character, stronger in content, and wiser in craft. Mentoring puts learning into real-time contexts with real-live feedback. Back to top.

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WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

One of the most common questions we get from students and people who are serving as mentors (or who have been asked to be a mentor) is, "What makes a good mentor?" It's an understandable question. Many of us have not had experience in mentoring relationships. When students are asked to identify and invite someone to be a mentor in the program, that is often the first time they have ever done something like that. For those who are asked to consider serving as a mentor, it might be the first time they have been asked, as well. I am not surprised, therefore, that this is a common question. In the following paragraphs, I am going to highlight the two most important characteristics of people who make good mentors for students enrolled in Kairos.

So, what makes a good mentor?

Well, the answer might be a bit anticlimactic. Good mentors are 1) available and 2) responsive. I know, I know, I know. That seems a bit too simplistic. What about expertise? Degrees? Experience? I will address those kinds of things at the end of this post, but let's look at these two important and mutually-reinforcing characteristics first.

Available

Good mentors are available. By that I mean they have the time, energy, and space to be available to walk alongside students as they progress through their journey of discipleship in Kairos.

Time

Most mentors tell us that they spend about 1 to 4 hours each month with the students they serve. A good mentor will be available to spend time with students—not "hurried" time or "agenda-driven" time but personal and unhurried time with the student.

Energy

Not only are good mentors willing to spend time with those they serve, but they are also excited to spend time with them. Good mentors desire to spend time with those they serve because they see the investment of time as an opportunity to encourage and support a fellow follower of Jesus.

Space

Finally, being available means having space—space in one's schedule and, perhaps, most importantly space in one's heart. Good mentors are emotionally available to those they serve. Being a mentor is not about being a "robot" that simply asks questions or evaluates assignments. A good mentor opens room in their heart to be a sojourner with the student.

Responsive

Good mentors are responsive. They are responsive to the needs of the student and responsive in their communication practices. Being available is important, but that characteristic is not enough to carry the day. Only when it is coupled with being responsive will the mentoring relationship begin to flourish.

Needs of the Student

When someone asks you to be a mentor, it can be tempting to assume your primary value will be dispensing wisdom or teaching concepts. When we succumb to that temptation, we run the risk of making assumptions about what the student needs and how we can best come alongside them. Instead, being responsive begins by listening to the student, hearing her or him describe their needs, and being a conversation partner as the student begins to articulate the "why" or "what" or "when" of their educational journey. To put that another way, being responsive to the needs of the student means asking questions with a curious heart and mind in order to develop empathy and understanding. It is from that position that we are best able to help students discern, develop, and demonstrate proficiency in their context and call.

Communication Practices

In a very pragmatic sense, this aspect of responsiveness might be the most straightforward. Being responsive means…being responsive. That could mean replying to an email, phone call, or text message within a certain period of time or reviewing material and providing feedback by a certain date. The best rhythms of communication are the ones that follow shared expectations with the mentor team as a whole. I know, that last sentence didn't really give specifics – that was the point. I am not saying that everyone needs to reply to emails or text messages immediately in order to be responsive. I am simply saying that the mentor team should work together to clarify expectations for responsive communication within the context of that team. On one team, it could be the team has a practice of replying to emails over the course of a week. Another team may rely on monthly conversations on Zoom rather than expecting responses via email. There is no prescribed type of responsive community. A good mentor will work with the team to ensure that there is a shared expectation for responsive communication practices.

So, what about expertise? Degrees? Experience? The reason I didn't mention them here is that they are not the primary indicators of good mentors. If given the option of a person who is an expert in a relevant field and

someone who is available and responsive in the ways listed above, I will always recommend the latter. We have been engaged in a philosophy of education that leverages mentored teamwork for the better part of the last decade. Over that time, we have worked with thousands of mentors who are spread out across six continents. Time and time again, good mentors are those who are available and responsive.

As I reflect on that reality, it seems to make sense to me. Kairos is, first and foremost, a journey of discipleship, which means it is a relational endeavor. Relationships take time and, at least in my experience, seem to work best when people are available and responsive. Back to top.

MENTORING TOOLS – THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

When serving as a mentor within the Kairos community, you are embracing the opportunity to steward followers of Jesus who flourish in their vocations for the sake of the world. To put it another way, you are walking alongside another citizen of the Kingdom as part of a team of people who are learning together what it looks like to be a faithful follower of Jesus in a particular context and vocation.

Admittedly, that can sound like a daunting task – especially for someone who has never served in a mentoring role of this nature. Keep in mind, however, that the primary gift you bring to this process is you – not your expertise or experience. It is your commitment to being available and responsive to the student and team that is on this journey with you. To aid you in this endeavor, Kairos provides several resources and various opportunities to interact with others engaged in similar work. Today, we are sharing one of those important resources – the Development Process.

One of the underlying theological and educational assumptions we make within Kairos is that "knowing" is an integrative task. This reality invites us to recognize that to "know" something one must not only understand content within a particular area but also that one's character (i.e., their way of being) and craft (i.e., the work they do) are overtly shaped by that content in observable ways. We will say more about this in upcoming articles. Another assumption is that the standards for what is "excellent" or "proficient" are defined within particular communities of practice. This means that the definition for "excellent" biblical literacy is contextual, not universal.

We share those assumptions because they provide a helpful background when using the development process tool with your student and mentor team. This tool is designed to help you foster, with the student and the mentor team, generative conversations that guide and shape the student's educational journey. Rather than submissively completing a series of tasks or courses required by the institution, students within Kairos are

invited to take ownership of their journey of discipleship. The development process helps students consider various aspects of their journey in conversation with their mentor team and community while taking into account their context and call. So, let's take a look at the various steps of the process.

The Development Process

The Development Process guides a student's journey toward proficiency within each outcome-level course in Kairos. It is what provides intentionality, consistency, and flexibility. As students progress through an outcome, they engage in an ongoing and iterative process of development. Regardless of the program or outcome, the process of development is intended to remain the same. While each of the seven steps in the process builds on the steps that come before it, the process is not meant to be rigid or linear. It is an iterative process, which means that the student and mentor team may often revisit the various steps as the student makes progress in a particular outcome. It is also true that the first time a student and mentor team consider an outcome, it can be helpful to walk through the first five steps in a somewhat linear fashion. Here are the steps in the process:

1) Define Proficiency

Discuss what proficiency of content (i.e., vocabulary, cognitive framework, and historical understanding, etc.), character (i.e., what that outcome looks like when integrated into a student's life or way of being, etc.), and craft (i.e., skills and practices, etc.), looks like in your tradition, context, and vocation. Doing this will result in a more robust understanding of the master assessment process and rubric. In this step, the mentor team and student are asking questions like, "What behaviors, skills, and cognitive understanding are indicative of someone who is proficient in this outcome?" or "When we look at people deemed to be proficient in my context, tradition, or vocation, what seems to be true about them relative to this given outcome?" or "Given the vast array of what we could learn in this outcome, where are we going to focus our attention in light of the student's context, tradition, and call?" If the student doesn't have a readily identifiable context, tradition, or call, then perhaps the best first step is to begin by reflecting on the student's life and faith journey thus far by beginning with a conversation about the spiritual narrative of the student.

2) Assess Prior Learning

Discuss the student's current level of competency, that is, what does the student bring to this journey? Take time to describe the student's prior learning and experiences with a specific focus on how they relate to the definition of competency articulated in step 1. Everyone comes into their Kairos journey with some sort of prior learning – some body of integrated knowledge that has helped them learn and grow in their walk with Christ and in their vocational context. In this step, we are identifying those areas of prior learning. This learning could be formal or informal; it could be classes, webinars, readings, or life experiences. We might ask questions like, "How do you (the student) feel prepared to engage in this particular outcome?" or "How would you (the student) describe your familiarity with the various aspects of this outcome?" or "What experience do you (the student) have with the various aspects of this outcome and what have you learned from them?" An

important thing to note here is that we are not simply asking, “What have you (the student) already done and how does that count toward your degree?” or “What work do you (the student) not need to do because you have already done it elsewhere?” The first set of questions invites us to think through what we have learned in order to consider where God might be leading us next in our journey of discipleship – they are generative and forward-looking. The second type of question assumes that learning (and therefore discipleship) is simply about “completing assignments” or “digesting content,” which focuses attention on task completion, not discipleship.

3) Identify Growth

In light of the definitions of proficiency and assessment of prior learning, the next step is to identify areas in which the student needs to develop further. This is an ongoing process that continues even after graduation, so give attention to the fact that the student and mentor team may continue to have this conversation over time. In the same way that everyone begins their journey through Kairos with some level of prior learning, everyone also has areas of needed growth. In this step, the student and team are asking questions like, “Where does the student need to deepen their understanding, more thoroughly integrate or be transformed by, or sharpen their skills relative to this outcome?” or “Given the vocational goals of the student, where do they need to invest time and energy in this outcome?” or “What aspects of this outcome are most interesting to the student?” or “Are there aspects of this outcome that the student ‘doesn’t know they don’t know?’” In plain terms, this step in the process is where the student and mentor team are invited to lean into the reality that discipleship is an ongoing and unending process. There is always room to grow and if someone doesn’t see a need for growth, then perhaps the most pressing area of growth within an outcome is related to the character dimension of knowing?

4) Identify Resources

Determine the resources that are available for the student to progress through this learning journey. In our world of such abundance, there are actually many opportunities for deep learning and practice. It is in this step that the mentor team and student work together to consider the vast array of resources available to progress through the Kairos journey. Of course, there are scheduled and self-paced learning experiences available through Kairos University and its global network of partners. In addition, mentors can help students consider other resources that might be available to them. Perhaps there are people the student could interact with, podcasts or blogs that might be useful, or experiences that might help them. In this step, all we are doing is opening our eyes to the potential resources that are available.

5) Develop a Path

Outline the various tools, learning experiences, projects, etc. that will be used to make progress toward proficiency. The student may start with a path that is already developed or choose to work with the mentor team to completely adapt the learning journey or come up with something in between. After considering

resources, the team and student can begin to outline a potential path forward. The path a student takes to identify, develop, and demonstrate proficiency within an outcome can be as unique as the student. No one needs to take the same path because no two people are exactly alike. As the team and student engage in this step, it is best to approach the conversation with the mindset of "What will help the student identify, develop, and demonstrate proficiency?" rather than defaulting to "What classes does the student need to take?" or "What assignments need to be checked off the list?" As their mentor, we want to encourage you to invite the student into a time of reflection as to how they journey best. Rather than thinking about the path as a set of activities or tasks, picture it as a series of encounters, each of which provides greater clarity regarding the next step to take and an opportunity to demonstrate and integrate what is being learned.

6) Assess and Adjust

As the student and the mentor team begin to understand each other, the student's context and vocation, the areas of growth or prior learning, and the particularities of their journey, together they will naturally assess and adjust definitions of proficiency, areas of needed growth, resources that might be helpful, and the path that might be most helpful for the student. We urge everyone to embrace this iterative nature of development as it is what encourages growth. As the short description of this step implies, the sixth step of the development process is an ongoing process of assessment and adjustment. In this step, the mentors and student are reflecting on the student's journey thus far and then making adjustments as necessary to the path outlined in step 5. For example, the student may discover that she had more prior learning than she considered in step 2 which, in turn, requires adjustments to the path. Likewise, the mentor team may become aware of areas of needed growth that were not evident until some initial work was done. It is this step that, perhaps, most invites us to recognize that discipleship and, therefore, that learning is messy and organic rather than linear and regimented. As a mentor, we encourage you to work with your student and the team to embrace what God might have in store that no one was expecting.

7) Conduct a Master Assessment

Begin by reviewing definitions of proficiency developed by your team and the master assessment rubric. Then, work through the master assessment process with your team using these instructions. Progress in Kairos is tied to the master assessment process. While there may be certain learning experiences that are completed along the way, each outcome-level course is marked as complete only when the student and mentor team determine the student has passed a master assessment. A master assessment is a conversation about proficiency that functions as a comprehensive review and assessment of an outcome. Often, this review is based on the work a student has done throughout the particular outcome while, at other times, it may follow a particular "capstone" assignment that best exemplifies the outcome. In each case, the goal is to approach this process as a celebration of learning, not a final hurdle to clear or a hoop to jump through. Because the entire educational journey should be done in light of the definitions of proficiency identified in the first step of the development process, the master assessment should be a time to reflect on what the journey has been, what's been learned, what the growth edges are for the student, and what leaning into those edges might look like going forward. What is most important is to take the approach that best serves the student. Master

assessment reviews ordinarily take 1-2 hours and are wonderful opportunities to affirm the student, to recognize the work God has done in and through the student, and to consider where God might be leading the student to go deeper. The development process within Kairos is an important tool for students and mentors. It provides a framework for conversations that will help students identify, develop, and demonstrate proficiency within a particular outcome. By working with the student through this process, mentors are not only helping the student make progress within his or her program but also facilitating the student's ongoing journey of discipleship as he or she develops the skill to take ownership of her educational journey. Back to top.

MENTORING FOR INTEGRATION OF CONTENT, CHARACTER, AND CRAFT

As members of mentor teams, how do we mentor for each of these dimensions, for content, character, and craft? What do we mean when we talk about each of these dimensions of knowledge and why is it important both understand what we mean and how to mentor with an eye toward each?

To get us started answering these questions, we should remind ourselves of where we are. That is, we should remind ourselves that we have all been deeply formed by reductionist approaches to "knowing" that have essentially equated knowledge with "content" and, thus, education with the acquisition of content. As this tendency became more pronounced, its deforming implications became evident in our students. In response, we began to add elements to the educational journey to "shore up" the deficiencies we were seeing.

The earliest deficiencies had to do with the ability of our students to make connections between what they were learning in the classroom and what that knowledge looked like in the ministry context. These deficiencies were addressed by adding things to the curriculum where students had to put their "knowledge" into "practice," such as in field education, internship programs, and the sort. The best step in this direction came in the form of "service learning" as we began to recognize the value of the service context for achieving our educational goals.

The second deficiency had to do with "spiritual formation." What we began to see in our educational practices was that we were not attending enough to the personal transformation in the lives of our students. We expected an education in the Christian faith and the preparation for Christian ministry to have more engagement in that area. We found it was too easy to produce people with a high level of content awareness but who, we believed, were too little impacted by that content. The best step in this direction was the introduction of spiritual formation courses into our curriculum and even requiring the "spiritual direction" of our

students.

A third deficiency was related to the work of integrating the various disciplines within the educational journey. We noticed students would develop an understanding of the content within biblical studies, for example, but that they struggled to see how content within theology, ethics, and worship were to be integrated into that understanding. We expected students to be able to integrate these discrete disciplines but were aware it was not happening. The best step in this direction was to create new courses like "integrative seminar" or "integration and ministry practice" that were designed to be completed at the end of a student's educational journey with the goal of requiring students to integrate content from the various disciplines within their program.

Mentoring and Content

The content dimension of knowledge is by far the most familiar to us. Given the priority that content has had in education, everyone in the system has been deeply formed by its importance. As we say in our master assessment rubrics, content refers to the vocabulary, cognitive frameworks, standards of excellence, historical development, and traditions of a given learning/developmental category rather than a canon of important and/or essential facts/data. In Kairos, we have built an educational system on the recognition that facts are always constituted by and interpreted within systems of thought which actually make them "facts." These systems of thought are shaped by a variety of cognitive frameworks which have their own histories, social locations, conflicts, and debates.

At its heart, content proficiency names the way a student displays the ability to think credibly within the resources, structures, and frameworks of a particular discipline or area of thought. This always assumes familiarity with facts but is much more. For example, in Kairos, content proficiency for theology refers to a student's ability to think theologically within their tradition and to engage in credible ways others internal and external to that tradition. It is important to recognize that all three mentors attend to this dimension of knowledge. Though the faculty mentor may carry the heaviest load in regard to content proficiency, the vocational mentor and the personal mentor have important roles as well.

All three mentors on the team are essential in defining and assessing proficiency of content. We are well aware that there is far too much credible content available than can be learned on this journey. Decisions are always being made as to how broad, how deep; indeed, how much content is needed for the student to flourish in the vocational context to which God has called him or her.

Rather than leave this solely to the faculty mentor, in Kairos, we share this responsibility with the other mentors. The vocational mentor has a particularly important role in this decision-making process related to what content is most needed in the vocational context. The specialized expertise the vocational mentor brings to the team is unique as to what content is needed to flourish in that vocational context. The personal mentor has an important role in these decisions as well. With particular attention to the life of the student, the

personal mentor can provide insight into the specific needs of the student in particular areas of content growth. Given the privileged status that comes with the role of faculty mentor on the mentor team, the faculty mentor will have to work especially hard to draw out the perspective and insights of the other two mentors to help define the needed content and to define proficiency for any particular student. Back to top.

MENTORING AND THE CHARACTER DIMENSION OF KNOWING

Mentoring and Character

Scripture shows us "knowing" is an intimate process that deeply connects the knower with what is known. Unlike approaches to education that hide, ignore, or deny this dimension of knowing, we embrace it and believe it's essential in any educational journey. We believe that knowledge is achieved only when, and to the extent that, one's personhood is impacted by what is known. Knowing, as we see it, is neither just about the learner nor about what is being learned—the "great thing" as Parker Palmer calls it. Rather, knowledge emerges from the engagement of the learner with the "great thing."

Such knowledge transforms the knower into what is known as that which is known takes roots in the life of the learner; as, again, in the words of Parker Palmer, the "small" story of the learner finds its place in the "big" story of the great thing; and the "big" story of the great thing finds its place in the "small" story of the learner. We call this dimension of knowing, the character dimension. Assessing this dimension of another's life is fraught with difficulty, and the invitation to speak into one's life is a privilege that should never be taken lightly. It should always be embraced with the utmost humility and care.

But calling what we do here the "character" dimension of knowing can mislead us a bit as to what we are doing in each outcome assessment. There is the temptation to abstract this notion of "character" from the particular outcome and to generalize it into assessing whether the student is a "good person" or not. This often takes the form of asking whether they display the fruit of the Spirit, embody the beatitudes, or a host of other Biblical criteria/evidence of being a good person. Of course, we want our students to display these qualities. We also believe that the journey of embodying true knowledge will be a journey toward good character in this sense and that each outcome for which each student strives to display proficiency can contribute to that. But this is not what we are assessing in each outcome assessment we do. This kind of assessment is what we do in the Christian Spirituality outcome, not in each outcome's master assessment.

Rather, in the character dimension of the master assessment, the mentor team is assessing how well the student has integrated the content learned in that outcome into their personhood, their way of being in the world.

Assessing the level of proficiency asks questions like: how well did the student integrate this content into who they are as a person? How has it come to impact their life as a faithful follower of Jesus? Do they regularly and consistently show the impact of this content in their life with others? Is their integration something that is worthy of imitation or worthy of commendation? Are there areas of the student's life that need to display this outcome better? Has the learner been appropriately transformed in pursuit of the outcome? How has the journey of this outcome changed the learner? These are the kinds of questions that direct our character assessment of the outcome.

Obviously, personal integration and transformation are closely related to good character. Both are essential in the journey toward being the people Jesus calls us to be and being able to flourish in our vocational context. But what we are assessing in the character dimension of the master assessment needs to be specific to each outcome if the student is going to be a person who flourishes in their context. The assessment of this proficiency, as with that of content proficiency, requires the insight and perspective of each member of the mentor team. Back to top.

MENTORING AND THE CRAFT DIMENSION OF KNOWING

Mentoring and Craft

All knowing is a kind of doing, and all such doing is inherently and inextricably connected to our bodies. There is simply no way for humans to get around this fact, nor should we want to. It's the way God created us. We are knowers physically embedded in time and place. We are neither disembodied thinkers nor are we brains on sticks (a la James K. A. Smith). Failure to attend to our bodies in the process of knowing has disastrous effects of which anyone who has tried to take a final exam with the flu or study with a migraine is aware. Our bodies are what situate us in the world. Simply put, we used to think that knowing and doing were two separate things, but contemporary neuroscience has decisively put that falsehood to rest.

It is this "doing" dimension of the knowing process that is named by "craft." So, in mentoring for the craft dimension of proficiency in an outcome, one question we can start with is: what should you be able to do with the content of this outcome? It is the recognition that if a learner can't do the things that their vocational context needs them to do, they are not prepared to flourish in that context and their proficiency in the outcome is diminished.

We should note that all education has focused on some kind of doing, whether it was made explicit or not. But historically, the things we learned to do in the educational journey were dictated by the academy. We should make clear, there is a lot of value in the things it has asked us to do. Memorizing data, analyzing arguments, writing book reviews, writing research papers, taking exams, and the myriad other things which could be added to this list all cultivate and display skills important for life. But it should not go unnoticed that these tasks are most particularly important for the creation and distribution of knowledge (i.e., content). Once again, the issue isn't that these "doings" are wrong or bad, and they are important skills we have cultivated in the past that should be maintained. We mustn't throw the baby out with the bathwater but rather ask whether what we have been asking for is adequate for the tasks students are being asked to do in their vocations? What a knower should be able to do with what they have learned needs to be informed by not only the academy but also the vocational context.

For some of the things that students need to learn, the craft dimension is straightforward. If the student is developing proficiency in effective communication, they must learn to communicate; in interpreting the bible, to interpret the bible; or to teach, they must teach. It is not good enough for them to know about preaching, interpreting, or teaching, they must actually be able to do something with what they learn: to practice the skill.

But the craft dimension of knowing is not limited to these skills. In fact, as one matures in one's proficiency in knowing one begins to recognize deeper, broader, and more subtle ways in which we are impacted by our knowing.

This is what has led many people to think about knowing an outcome as much as "ways of thinking" as they are "collections of content." For an overly simplistic example, the importance of knowing history certainly includes content (e.g., familiarity with the data of history such as dates and time periods) and learning history often brings with it the ability to recite dates (e.g., identifying events with dates, etc.) but certainly does not consist of merely being able to recite or identify dates. Sure, that's one thing you can do, and sometimes that's really needed, but another is to help us understand what's happened in the past to enable us to see the impact of that past on how we live and think today. Thinking historically is about being able to contextualize and situate events that impact life today. In this sense, learning history is about being able to think historically.

The same could be said about theology, biblical studies, cultural studies, and a host of other outcomes we engage in Kairos. Thinking theologically, biblically, and culturally involve a variety of skills that are needed in the life of the knower as well as in the vocational context to which they are called. This invites us to ask: what does

thinking historically, theologically, biblically, or culturally look like in the vocational context of the student? These are important questions for each learner and for flourishing in the vocation to which they are called to serve and ones that must be discerned through the mentor team's mentoring of the learner.

Thus, again, all three mentors have important voices in assessing the craft dimension of knowledge. The faculty mentor certainly represents an important lens, one which often gets privilege status even here at Kairos. The vocational mentor, however, has an indispensable role in this dimension of knowing as an essential voice in determining both what needs to be done and helping articulate how well it must be done in order to flourish in the vocational context. The conversation between the mentor team and learner about what an outcome looks like when performed well in a context is a vital step in both guiding the learning pathway and in assessing how proficient the learner is in the craft dimension.

As we often say, education is a journey of going from where you are to where God wants you to be. In the Kairos journey, proficiency of knowledge and the integration of content, character, and craft happens best when the mentor team attends to all three dimensions of knowing by learning to hear and appreciate the contribution of each of the three mentors. Back to top.

THE ROLE OF A VOCATIONAL MENTOR

A few weeks ago, I happened upon a conversation with a mentor of mine from my college years. As soon as I saw him, I knew he would offer a kind smile and his question would be, "What's the story?" This moment took me back to the many times he would simply ask, "What's the story?" when I felt confused as a young adult sorting through God's will and purposes for my life.

This conversation took me back to the many times he and his wife sat with me, listened, heard my questions and longings, and prayerfully asked a discerning question or two. I was very aware of how I trusted these mentors to hear my story, pray with me, and, perhaps, give a word or two of wisdom and encouragement. I was keenly aware that these mentors were devoted to God because I could "hear" the depth of their relationship with God in their prayers for me and others. They lived life in Christ as persons and as a lawyer and a nurse by living faithfully with and amongst others. The way they lived their lives empowered many others to live Christ in their vocations.

As we consider the calling, or role, of a vocational mentor in Kairos, I want to remind us that our primary calling is salvation in God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our secondary calling is to specific tasks in life through which we serve God, family, friends, and the Church. Vocation refers to all of life and the many roles we fulfill in everyday life, not just what we might get paid to do. Some vocational mentors have

specific training, others have more informal training. A vocational mentor has a sense of who they are and a skillset that they have developed which has equipped them to be a vocational mentor. Mentoring comes with expectations, so it seems worthy that the student and vocational mentor set expectations in the mentoring relationship. These expectations can be named by having a conversation around questions, such as:

Who am I becoming as a person?
Who am I called to serve?
How is one equipped for this respective vocation?
What will it mean to finish well in Kairos and in life?

Roles and expectations necessitate responsibilities which require something of who we are and what we do. It is important for the student and vocational mentor to describe how they will be responsible to each other in the learning process and notice what support will be needed in the challenges and growth points of the respective learning and work. As in Kairos, pay attention to what feels timely and is a good work for the given day.

One's role as a vocational mentor requires trusting the work of the Spirit in their life as well as the student's life. The life of a disciple, or vocational mentor, means imitating Jesus in his ability to see and recognize people. The role of vocational mentor can be to share experiences and encouragements of imitating Christ in their respective work, but more so asking questions that will prepare the student to imitate Christ in their own life and work. Ultimately, the vocational mentor can cultivate intentional humility and Christ-like servanthood with the student. Prayerfully be present as the student learns about being an influencer of the Kingdom with what she or he has been entrusted to be and to do.

"Lord, let me know clearly the work which You are calling me to do in life. And grant me every grace I need to answer Your call with courage and love and lasting dedication to Your will" (Vocation Prayer – Saint Meinrad Prayer Book). Back to top.

THE ROLE OF A PERSONAL MENTOR

The Kairos University approach to theological education requires mentoring. Why? Because a Christian life of discipleship requires mentoring!

In order for growth and transformation in a student's life, the mentor team plays an essential role. In particular, the personal mentor operates in a unique and holy space in a student's life. All of the roles on a Kairos mentor team have meaning and purpose. The work of the mentors integrates together much like a student's journey

through the content, character, and craft components of the curriculum. Without the personal mentor's participation, however, a Kairos student's journey clearly suffers. Growth is limited. Transformation becomes harder to come by.

A personal mentor operates in the space between a student's personal life and their vocation. This person uses the trust that already exists in the mentor/mentee relationship in order to ask questions of character throughout the Kairos journey.

"How are things going at home? How's your family handling your vocational call? When is your Sabbath? How do your finances align with your values? Where is joy occurring in your community?"

Questions like these are essential to successful vocation, and a Kairos personal mentor works to make sure that the student's answers and work in these areas become a part of the assessment conversation within a mentor team.

Who might make an amazing personal mentor? A wise fellow member of the congregation, a best friend since high school, a family friend that seems to always be there, or a trusted co-worker who has access to your faith story. Anyone who has a student's trust, is familiar with the student's life and home, and believes in the power of Christ and the disciple's journey will make a great personal mentor.

There definitely are some learning curves that come with living into the Kairos personal mentor role. For instance, when was the last time you assessed anyone based on character? It's one thing to speak into another person's life…but it's quite another to speak that good word while in a group of others who have just been brought together a few months prior! Working with the faculty and vocational mentors intentionally to build trust early in the mentor team relationship is vital. Being able to lift up a student in the midst of their Kairos journey and to speak life and truth into their journey is an eternal gift that Kairos can bring.

Personal mentors often find that most of the content pieces of the curriculum are new to them. That does not mean that they have no voice to offer in the conversation! As the student wrestles with the texts, lectures, and educational experiences, a personal mentor is usually the first in line to witness any learnings, struggles, and transformation. This is the holy space where "why it matters" and "what does it mean for my life" exist. Scripturally, this is where Mary met Elizabeth after becoming pregnant with Jesus…seeking answers to these essential questions. It's where Jesus' disciples fulfilled their unique roles as "friends" to one another after the resurrection, seeking answers to the meaning of what was revealed to them.

At this point, you might be asking, "What does this personal mentor role require of me?" Most importantly, and intentionally, the answer to that question is "you." You fully present with the student on a weekly basis, offering a listening ear and words of affirmation. Also present in a space of trust where you can give a word of accountability and challenge. Honest and open humans, with patience and perseverance, are always welcome. You don't have to be perfect! The journey of a Kairos personal mentor is a disciple's journey, and we are excited

at how God is utilizing this role for the glory of the Kingdom! Back to top.

ASK QUESTIONS; DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

One of the most common misconceptions about theological education is that those who enroll in a theological program plan to serve in pastoral ministry within a local congregation. For the seminaries in the United States and Canada that are members of the Association of Theological Schools, however, the fact is that the majority of students who enroll in a program are not planning to pursue congregational ministry as a career (even a bi-vocational one).

This is true for Kairos University, as well. We have the privilege of working with students who serve in the military and ones who work in finance or real estate. Yes, we have students who serve as missionaries, church planters, and pastors, but it is unhelpful to assume that every student engaged in theological education is doing so for the purpose of engaging in congregational ministry.

This reality is one of many examples of why it is important for mentors to listen first, then ask questions, then listen some more. Mentors across the Kairos community might describe this reality in different ways. David Woolverton, Kairos Affiliate Professor, describes it in the following way: listen—look—acknowledge—reframe.

- **Listening and looking** are tools for gathering information about the student's experience. When we are looking and listening as a mentor, we need to gauge not only words but also body language, emotional undertones, and even the intuitive sense of the listener.
- As part of the listening process, it's important to let the student know that you've heard them – so **acknowledging** what you've heard becomes critical. It's especially important to assess whether the student is expressing or demonstrating a pattern of thinking or behaving, or whether what's being shared is an obstacle or stumbling block to their learning goals. Acknowledging it out loud – whether one-on-one or in the mentor team group, depending on the nature of the issue – is actually a critical part of the mentoring process.
- Then, we can look for ways to **reframe** what was shared in order to keep the student's educational experience holistically moving forward.

One of the best ways to engage in this process is to ask questions first, then listen, then acknowledge, then listen and ask questions. Rinse and repeat.

Too often, the educational paradigms that have dominated modern theological education insist on someone providing content or sharing expertise rather than inviting the student to engage in self-reflection and critical

thinking. In the “content-and-expertise-first” paradigm, mentoring tends to devolve into one-on-one teaching. When that happens, we run the risk of letting our assumptions about the student guide our work. We may, for example, let our conversations be guided by the assumption that the student enrolled for the purpose of engaging in congregational ministry.

One of our faculty mentors commented on how this very thing was a learning experience for him. He tended to assume he knew why someone had enrolled in a program. When he turned off that assumption (and assumptions in general), he found that by asking questions and listening to the Spirit in concert with the team as a whole, the conversations, learning, and discipleship journey of the student was dramatically more transformational.

If you are new to mentoring, however, you may find it difficult to know which questions to ask. With the help of some of our mentors, we gathered a few that might be helpful.

As students are beginning their programs, you may ask:

- Other than obtaining a degree, why did you begin this program?
- Where do you feel you need to learn and grow? Why?
- How will you know when you have learned what you needed to learn?
- Who in your vocation or community of faith do you respect and why?
- What does it look like to be “successful” in your vocation? How does your understanding of who God is and what God is doing in the world impact that understanding of success?
- How can I help? How can we help?
- You have a lot of prior learning. What are one or two things that you wish you knew more about? What would you want to know if you were going to teach this to others?
- How would you like to be confronted by me/us when I/we see something that’s not consistent with who you are?
- What specific areas of your life do you want to grow in?
- What skills do you want to develop?
- What do you consider to be your top 1-3 strengths?
- In what areas of your present ministry or vocational context do your weaknesses hinder you?
- What are some of the typical excuses you give yourself (and others) when you: don’t want to engage in tasks, procrastinate, or fail? How would you like me/us to respond when you use those excuses on me/us?
- What–or who–inspires you?
- When facing an obstacle, how do you typically respond? What have you tried in the past when you needed to overcome challenges to meet your goals?

When students are working on various outcomes within the program, you may ask:

- Can you help me to understand why you chose to do that?
- Why this…and why now?
- It sounds like you have really strong opinions about ___. Can you share with me/us why that perspective is so important to you?
- Do you feel comfortable sharing a little more on this topic?
- You shared that you don't really know why you haven't been able to get started on your assignments. What would you say if you did know?
- If you were going to teach me the most important aspect of this assignment, what would that be?
- What do you want to do with what you're learning in this outcome/learning experience/conversation?

Asking questions is a valuable tool when engaging in the work of mentoring. It is a wonderful way to learn about the student with whom you are walking through a journey of discipleship. As you engage in your work, you will discover other questions that are useful for you. These are just a few to help you get started! Back to top.

MENTORING RESOURCE LIST

Below is a list containing some resources that the team at Kairos has found helpful over the years. We provide this list not as an "exhaustive list of mentoring resources" but rather as an informal expression of a few things that members of our team have found useful as they stepped into the role of mentoring. When possible, we have included a short description of the resource.

Mentoring Resources

Calling in Context (Moros, Susan L.) – This is a good book for mentors who are looking for material about understanding vocation.

Deep Mentoring (Reese, Randy D. and Loane, Robert) – This book is designed to help you know how to better come alongside others as a guide and a friend and to invest in their spiritual formation and leadership. If you want a long-term impact on the lives of future leaders, how you guide must be just as important as the content you impart.

A Mentoring Guide: Christ. Conversation. Companionship. (VantagePoint3 Team) – This guide is designed to help you trust Jesus and yourself more. It helps you navigate a mentoring role with greater confidence and discernment. If you do not think you have what it takes to mentor others well, this is a good book for you.

Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People like Jesus Did (Breen, Mike) – With his use of "life shapes," Breen creates a natural platform for reframing discipleship around a missional lifestyle. These life shapes can be used in one-on-one mentoring as well as in groups.

Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship (Bonhoeffer, Dietrich) – This classic book is foundational for exploring the deeper levels of trust and accountability that are required for exceptional mentoring relationships.

The Power of the Other – (Cloud, Henry) – An exceptional treatise on how those who speak into our lives can shape our character into what it was meant to be, whom we are called to be. Dr. Cloud penetrates into the heart of relational significance, appropriately teaching the reader how to discern the right "others" to allow entrée into our self-definition. Great resource for mentors and mentees.

The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith (Hagberg, Janet O. and Robert A. Guelich) – This is a great book for mentoring because it helps the mentor appreciate the spiritual formation processes that are so much a part of the mentee's/student's personal and professional development.

Intuitive Leadership: Embracing a Paradigm of Narrative, Metaphor, and Chaos (Keel, Tim) – Keel's book is more of a theological framework for the mentor's own perspective-building. He offers solid teaching on how we are "environmentalists" – equipping every context with the values we want to multiply. He also engages the reader on how we, as leaders, need to respond more fluidly to the demands of a postmodern world and church.

Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership (Lingenfelter, Sherwood G.) – This book provides a solid theological reference point for mentoring within an increasingly diverse culture, both individually and within groups.

Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit (Nouwen, Henri, Michael J. Christiansen, and Rebecca J. Laird) – Spiritual Formation is a powerful book in that it teaches the reader how to listen; for God's voice, to God's voice, to your voice, and to the voice of the other.

Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time (Ogden, Greg) – Ogden's book offers a solid theological and practical framework for mentoring and discipleship. Entire systems can be shifted by discipling just one person.

A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society (Peterson, Eugene) – This can be a good book for encouraging the mentor and mentee to not stress immediate and "quick fixes" but rather an enduring walk of faith.

Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God (Willard, Dallas) – Willard's "Hearing God" is a helpful place to start in a mentoring relationship. It provides a solid theological foundation and it invites a practical application perspective for both mentor and mentee.

The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact (Heath, C. and Heath, D.) – Chip and Dan Heath explore why certain brief experiences can jolt, elevate, and change us – and how we can learn to create such extraordinary moments in our own lives and work.

Crucial Conversations (Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., and Switzler, A.) – Crucial Conversations provides powerful skills to ensure every conversation, especially difficult ones, leads to the results you want.

Thanks for the Feedback (Stone, D. and Heen, S.) – Thanks for the Feedback focuses primarily on how to become better at receiving feedback.

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