

Research Article

Mentorship in the Context of Samuel and Gehazi's Training: A Basis for Enhancing Contemporary Christian Mentoring and Development

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Abstract: Mentorship is a vital tool in learning and development. It enhances the process of grooming efficient and productive life style as well as qualitative and capable leadership and personality. It has been part of the existence and practice of humanity formally and informally as well as found among animals. It is a major phenomenon that is inherent in the Bible. But contemporary church has not really taken cognizance of its worth in order to tap into its efficacy in a well organize system to strengthen relationship, faithfulness, and growth. Thus, this paper attempts to draw the church's attention to the process, strength, and importance of mentoring in the context of the Bible with a view to adopting its lessons and approaches for Christian mentorship and development. It observes that much of what is currently prevailing in the seemingly concept of mentorship though not properly arranged or systematized, falls less of what it should be in addition to its wrong usage as a subtle warring, factional and infighting mechanism. Consequently, the church is advised and encouraged to imbibe the pursuit of the Biblical concept of mentorship as found in the social, practical, religious and spiritual relationship between Samuel and Eli as well as Gehazi and Elisha as main characters in the study including several others instances particularly in the ministry of Jesus for its social, religious, and spiritual advancement.

Keywords: Mentor, Mentee, Mentoring, Mentorship, Church and Christian.

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INTRODUCTION

The act of mentoring is as old as human existence. Thus, it is a practice that is intrinsic with human nature. It was known in the ancient and biblical times as well as prevalent in animals. For instance, dogs, chickens and other birds, monkeys, cats, even fishes, tame and untamed animals in general have ways of teaching, guiding and leading their young ones to imbibe certain behaviours that are good for them in their individual, social, and collective wellbeing. For example, when chickens are hatched, they follow their mother to move around, learn, find and eat food, defend and protect themselves when endangered. Similarly, dogs, monkeys and other animals teach their young ones to practice the acts of love and care such as coddling, running to exercise, keep warm, search for prey and so on. Thus, mentorship is innate, characteristic of living things, and has significance in the development and service of mankind in the contemporary time as it was in the far past.

Mentoring cuts across various aspects of life and endeavour. Though, it is not new in human history, however, its awareness and overall practices to build a veritable society have not been very strong in contemporary time. Therefore, it is one aspect of man

that has been neglected and waiting to be tapped for the maximum development of humanity. Nevertheless, it was a means used in ancient time, Western world, and traditional African society. Conventionally, mentorship is a process of preparing young men and women for adult life, prospective leadership position at different levels, Businessmen and women, farmers, a husband, wife, and so on in West Africa (Amponsah, 1974: 52, 56-59; Ihunde, 2018). In the same vein, it is used for dispensing treatment, and the training of traditional health care giver. It is a well known practice among Igbo in Nigeria for building entrepreneurial skills. To this end, it serves as a means of raising artisans, bricklayers, carpenters, tailors and other local professionals (Ihunde). In the same vein, among other things, it is used in Esan, Edo in Nigeria to teach a bride in the art of home keeping, and for learners in the management of herbal treatment (Iyinbor, 2019).

Mentorship was used by the Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. It is found in several regions and cultures. Thus, it has potential to improve on modern system of learning (Ann S. Pihlgren and Hans Froman, 2009). Samuel Osho (2018) in his importance of mentoring posits that "Socrates mentored Plato." Plato was his best disciple.

A detailed works of Socrates became known through the writings of Plato. Plato in turn mentored Aristotle. He became a student of Plato at the age of 17 or 18 when he got enrolled into his Academy in Athens. He was with him until he attained age 37. "He is known as the 'Father of Western Philosophy.'" In similar circumstances, Aristotle himself mentored Alexander the Great. He came under his training at a tender age. And he was still with him when he reached 16 but died at 32.

It was known and practiced in America. For example, George Wythe was a mentor to Thomas Jefferson. Wythe was American first Professor of law. He was a renowned classics scholar. He worked at William and Mary College where he taught "a sizeable number of American leaders" (Samuel Osho). Among his numerous students, he was exceptionally close to Jefferson. Benjamin Graham was another well known great mentor in America. He mentored Warren Buffett. Benjamin was a British-American. He was a famous Professor, a reputable economist and investor. Consequently, mentoring is a tested strategy for building a rewarding future (Samuel Osho). To this end, in the contemporary time, it will enhance Christian ministries, relationships, and services if well harnessed for the church.

On the basis of the above, the study uses an empirical research procedure based on historical, theological, sociological and ethical approaches. Historical approach is an attempt to glean from the past. It utilizes information so acquired to peruse present circumstances. Moreover, it applies the enlightenment obtained to prudently guide future activities (Ayantayo, 2015:196). Theology on its part examines the available knowledge of God to a particular set of religious group, its impact on the people and how this in turn affects the people's understanding of themselves, their relationship to each other and ultimately to God. It also concerns their religious worldview, belief and expected place beyond the present time (Frank Whaling, 1999:227). Ethics plays the role of assessing a people's conducts, norms and practices. It determines the validity and justification of actions and belief systems, whether right or wrong, acceptable or not. It is partly related to religious or theological regulations, ordinances, statutes and expectations (Ayantayo, 183). Sociology is about the prevailing interconnectivities and relationships within a given set of people. Like ethics, it incorporates or takes cognizance of the value system, religious beliefs and their effects on the populace (Michael S. Nortbcott, 1999:193).

Mentorship in the Context of Samuel and Gehazi's Training

Samuel and Gehazi lived at different times and places. Stories of their lives and training are found in different books of the Old Testament. Yet, they share

some major aspects of their lives in common. They were both attached to a mentor and had a time of training. Their masters were persons who believed and served the same God. Thus, they were subject to the same requirements of belief, service, obedience and lordship. Their masters were exemplary in character and service. Both servants and masters were also of the same Jewish race. They served within the same set of people and culture. However, the effect of mentoring, their character disposition and application of lessons learnt in training with their consequences, reward or punishment are very different (1 Sa. 1-3; 2 Kg. 4 - 5).

Mentorship in the Context of Samuel's Training

Samuel's mentoring began with the spiritual foundation laid for him by the parents especially the mother. She combined parental care with her religious commitment in the weaning of Samuel. Thus, his process of mentorship started from childhood and continued with him in his training with Prophet Eli. To this end, this session provides information on his family background, childhood and formal training.

Family Background and Childhood

Samuel was a Hebrew, Prophet and one of the noblest men of the Old Testament. He was the last of the Judges ("Samuel," 1996). His parents were Elkanah and Hannah. They lived in Ramah ("Samuel"). Elkanah was a polygamist. Along with Hannah, he had another wife, Peninnah. "Peninnah had many children, including several sons..." (Mary J. Evans, 2000: 15). But Hannah was childless. However, she was greatly beloved by her husband. Consequently, her problem was inconsequential to him. That is not to say, he had no concern for her plight. But that he did not allow it to affect his commitment and affection for her. She also had the same liking for her husband in spite of her condition. Nevertheless, Hannah considered her situation as a personal tragedy (Evans).

Moreover, Elkanah was a God-fearing man. He involved himself and family in the service and worship of God. Annually, they go to Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices. Notwithstanding, the family was not wholly a happy and united one. There was serious rivalry between his two wives (Evans). Hannah was constantly being insulted by Peninnah. She taunted her with her childless condition. Even at Shiloh, she did not stop at it. Consequently, Hannah was greatly hurt by her pestering. Meanwhile, Elkanah did his best to comfort and make her happy. He was used to giving her a double of what her partner was given, yet she could not be pleased as this could not make up for the absence of children she seriously desired. So the husband's deep love could not solve her problem (1 Sa. 1:1-7).

Matthew Henry (1972:281) describes Samuel family as being devoted. His father, Elkanah a Levite, would usually take his family to a solemn feast at the

tabernacle in “Shiloh, to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts.” He was not known to have occupied a particular office as a Levite. Notwithstanding, he was committed enough to execute his religious obligation along with his family. He gives his own sacrifices. In this way, he serves as an encouragement and a good example to his neighbours. He was thus, remarkable because of the religious circumstances of his time that was in a general state of decay and neglect. At the same time, Eli’s children who were the chief officers “...in the service of the house of God...were men that conducted themselves very ill in their place, yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice. If the priests did not do their duty, he would do his.”

In spite of its devotion, Elkanah’s family was divided and plagued with guilt and grief caused by his marrying two wives. This act “was a transgression of the original institution of marriage.” It was the cause of mischief in Samuel’s father’s home. His two wives could not agree. Samuel’s mother (Hannah) like Rachel was the first and childless but was indeed very dear to her husband while Peninnah like Leah was second, fruitful and less beloved. Henry “was a transgression of the original institution of marriage” (281) further submits that the two women were of different tempers:

Peninnah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she grew melancholy and discontented: and Elkanah had a difficult part to act between them.

So it happened that on one occasion, at Shiloh, after the family meal, Hannah went to a corner of the house of worship (tabernacle) to pray. She was in great distress. With soberness, frenzied and worrying she was praying asking that God would give her a male child with a promise to dedicate him to the Lord if granted. She was not altering her request except that her lips were moving. The Prophet, Eli noticed and suspected her of being drunk. But she explains to him saying:

“Not so, my lord,” Hannah replied, “I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.” (1 Sa. 1:15-16, NIV).

Eli prayed and wished her well and she was happy and relieved (1 Sa. 1:17-18). Before the next visit to Shiloh in the subsequent year, Hannah had a male child. He was named Samuel. After he was weaned, the parents took him to Shiloh and gave him to Eli in dedication to God for all his life just as the mother had promised (1 Sa. 1:19-28). This was how Samuel came under the tutelage of Eli.

Samuel’s Training Under Eli

Samuel came under Eli’s training at a time when God’s word to the people had become rare and visions very few (1 Sa. 3). God withheld His word and vision to the people because of their corruption and disobedience. Nevertheless, in the midst of a depraved people, Samuel came out a different person, holy and God fearing (Wiersbe, 2007; 499). So in Samuel, we found a willing soul who in spite of the ungodly condition of his environment or time proved to be someone different knowing what he wishes and called to be in the Lord. Just as there was willingness on the part of Samuel to learn, similar motive also existed in Eli to teach him in the things of God as against an environment tinted, blurred and stained with sin. This was in spite of his age for he was very old, even as the Scriptures put it, “At that time, Eli ... eyesight had began to grow dim so that he could not see...” (1 Sa. 3:2, TNOAB). Yet, he was godly enough to do with Samuel what God destines him to without allowing his old age to affect his sense of productivity. This brings to fore a basic aspect of mentorship that has to do with the indispensable relationship that must exist between a mentor and mentee. It is about life and issues that should be of similar concern on spiritual or religious matters for both. In other words, there must be a common belief, approach and commitment that should constitute the ground on which the essence of the relationship of mentoring can breed.

Meanwhile, at a point, Samuel had a call, 1 Samuel 3:4, “Samuel! Samuel!!” (TNOAB). This call came to him four times. On each occasion, except the fourth after responding, “Here I am!” (v.4, TNOAB), he ran to Eli supposing that he was the one calling him (1 Sa. 3:4-10). Initially, Eli told him he did not call and asked him to go back to sleep for it was in the night. At the second time, before Eli instructs him again to go and sleep, as usual, he addresses him, “my son” (v. 6). This expresses the cordiality, acceptance, and intimate relationship needed in the process of mentoring. In the proceeding verse 7, first, the Scriptures say, Samuel at this time had not known the Lord. Moreover, that God’s word had not been revealed to him. What does this mean, or had Samuel not heard or really know anything about God or His worship? This is not what Scriptures here imply. To start with, Samuel was about twelve years old when he had this encounter. He was brought to Eli having been weaned at the age of three. Before that time, his mother Hannah had taught and prepared him for the worship of the Lord (Wiersbe, 2007: 499, 496).

Moreover, Samuel had spent nine years with Prophet Eli before this call of God to him. Within the years, he was definitely involved with Eli in the study, worship and practice of godly duties. Therefore, through his training with his mother and grooming with

Eli, he had heard and knew naturally about God. So, what he had not known was as Warren W. Wiersbe puts it, "... a personal knowledge of the Lord..." (2007: 496). This is what came to him when he had the call (1 Sa. 3:7-10). It is also expressed in the same verse 7 that Samuel had not received the revelation of God's word. Besides, the idea of revelation in this context is not about literal knowledge of God's word or Scriptures. Instead, it is the act of hearing directly or in a vision from God.

Eli's age and experience notwithstanding, he was not immediately aware of the source of Samuel's call. However, it was not directed at him and he had no idea of what was happening to the boy. This is due to the nature of the limitation of man. But by the persistency of the call and Samuel's repeated supposed responses to his master, Eli got the awareness that it was a call from the Lord. Nonetheless, the idea was still drawn from his experience of the working of God (Obadigie, 2020). Thus, at this point, verse 7, he advised him to answer and request that He should speak to him: "... speak LORD, for your servant is listening" (1 Sa. 3:9, TNOAB).

Another area of interest in the training of Samuel was his sense of commitment, loyalty, dedication and obedience to his master as well as his faithfulness to God. This is the basis of his repeated responses in going to Eli supposing he was the one calling him. One more view on this is his allegiance to God that came out of him when his master shows and asks him how he should respond to the Lord. This he did precisely as he was instructed (1 Sa. 3:10). It buttresses the sense of a common commitment of himself and his master to God. It also evidenced the claim that Christian mentorship lies on this mode of a corresponding sense of duty and purpose. Moreover, it depicts God's interest and patience with Samuel. So when he was missing the point of response, the Lord did not give up on him until he understood and acted rightly (vv. 1- 9). Therefore, in mentorship, Christians should desire to seek God's will, listen, hear and understand Him as well as to do what He says and bids them to. This is one of the ways they can avail themselves of the process of mentorship. In addition, Samuel tells his master precisely what God reveals to him. He did not slack from it in any way. It was appropriate as it portrays a mark of respect and sincerity toward his master and faithfulness to God.

Mentorship in the Context of Gehazi's Training

Gehazi's experience is quite different from that of Samuel. This is not necessarily as a result of the differences in terms of their masters. Rather, it is based mainly on their individual disposition and spiritual differences. Nevertheless, they were both subject to similar processes of mentoring. Samuel sees it as a calling, a preparation for a lifelong career and duty to

which he wholeheartedly gives himself with a deep sense of commitment. But for Gehazi, his outlook on it was quite different. It was more or less for him a course not for its purpose of grooming to meet spiritual and religious obligation but for material and physical survival. Hence, he failed in the process. It is possible his background could have contributed immensely to his failure. Nevertheless, the situation could also have been different if he had gotten a genuine conversion experience and applied himself appropriately to the process. His master, Elisha on the other hand could not be blamed for this as the study shows the extent to which he tried getting the best out of him. The seriousness of Elisha and his own wayward tendency underscore the reasons for his sack as shown by the next session.

Gehazi's Family Background and Training under Elisha

The Bible has no account of Gehazi's family background and childhood. What is available about him starts with his involvement in the master's (Prophet Elisha) desire to reciprocate the good gesture of the hospitality of the Shunammite woman who had been so magnanimous to them. Thus, on a particular day, while lodging in the home of the woman as they had always done when on a visit to the city of Shunem, Prophet Elisha felt the need to do something for her. So he called to Gehazi and asked him to fetch the woman. The woman came and the prophet asked Gehazi to find out from her what she would want them to do for her because of the labour she had taken on their behalf. Thus, the Bible declares,

One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us."

One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. He said to his servant Gehazi, "Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. Elisha said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?'" She replied, "I have a home among my own people." "What can be done for her?" Elisha asked. Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son and her husband is old." Then Elisha said, "Call her." So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. "About this time next year," Elisha said, "you will hold a son in your arms." (2 Kg. 4:8-15, NIV).

Now the main concern here is the portrayed mentoring relationship and procedure between the

Prophet and his servant. However, Gehazi was not just a servant in the ordinary sense of it or just to wait on Elisha but a protégé. Additionally, one will notice that Elisha instructs him to call the woman and he did. This is a sign of obedience. He did not grumble before executing the order. He did not also stray away only to reappear and attend to his master at a later time. Rather, without delay he went to call the woman. Though, afterward, he acted in contrast to what is right.

Meanwhile, Elisha on his part never avoided Gehazi in what he does. Instead, all through, he got him involved in whatever he does in a bid to impart him with his knowledge, skill and spirituality. This is the law or principle of involvement in mentorship, learning by practice initiated by the master and complemented by the learner. It becomes more pronounced when at the second time, on the arrival of the woman Elisha again requested that Gehazi should ask her what they would do for her because of the trouble she has taken on their behalf. Moreover, the Prophet was quite inclusive and certain about the idea of the persons involved in the care or hospitality of the woman. This is obvious with the usage of the objective and subjective plural pronouns “we” and “us” in verse 13. Thus, he did not count it as demeaning for him to make the woman as well as his servant become aware that the respect, honour and hospitality she gave in the provision of a home, furniture and food were not only for him but also for his servant, Gehazi. In this case, he shows him a sense of value, regard and worth. Believing that what was good for him should also go for his attendant. He did not cause him to be treated less than himself. Rather, he gave him a complete sense of humanity and status not as of a mere servant. In other words, he puts himself at equal level with Gehazi. This is an element of a godly servant-master relationship in mentoring (Mt. 20: 25-28).

So mentorship is the outpouring of one’s self or skill into another. It is the act of teaching someone to be what you are. That is why it cannot be done at a distance or by the detachment of the mentor from the mentee or vice versa. Therefore, when Elisha was using those phrases, “for us” and “can we” as contained in verse 13 of the above quotation in his expressions, he knew precisely what he was doing. Here, we can see his level of humility and the deep desire and sense of commitment he had in grooming Gehazi, a would-be prophet then in the making.

This view is further strengthened by Elisha’s request to Gehazi when the woman told him, she had no idea of anything she would want them to do for her since she was at peace with her people (v. 13): “What can be done for her Elisha asked” (v. 14). This question was indeed directed to Gehazi. Here again, the prophet did not play the boss, Lord or try to sidetrack Gehazi for any reason. He treated him as a colleague and not as a

subordinate. In the given atmosphere, Gehazi provided a suggestion: “She has no son and her husband is old” (v. 14). He brought out something of interest desiring sympathy from his master’s consideration with an emphasis on the age of her husband as a sign of the severity of her need. Elisha immediately caught the picture.

To this end, mentoring process can be described as a two way traffic between the mentor and the mentee. The latter provides, attends and serves the former while he is being groomed by him or her. It also goes to show that in the process of mentorship, the mentor also gains from his or her servant. Nevertheless, the discussion so far has shown that Gehazi was involved in a serious training with Prophet Elisha as Samuel was with Eli.

In another encounter after the woman had actually been blessed with a child as was suggested by Gehazi through the prayer of the Prophet, at a time the kid fell ill and died. She sought for Elisha to express her plight and to employ him to raise the child back to life. While she was still at a distance, the Prophet sited her and asked Gehazi to quickly meet her up before she could get to them. He told him to find out from her if it was well. He did, but the woman did not disclose the purpose of her coming to him. Instead, she answered in the affirmative that it was well (2 Kg. 4:15-26). But in anguish, on getting to Elisha, she held his feet. Gehazi quickly responded by pulling her away from him. But Elisha stopped and told him about the lost of her dear son. Moreover, that he had no knowledge or revelation of this at any time, before or after the death of the child. Surprisingly, instead of going by himself he told Gehazi to urgently be on the move to the woman’s house with his (Elisha) cloak and instruction on what to do. But the woman objected that she will not leave the man of God to go with his servant. This was because of her anguish and trust in him.

Notwithstanding, though Elisha actually got up to follow her, meanwhile he sent Gehazi to run ahead of himself giving him the privilege of practice in training. But, Gehazi returned with no positive effect on the dead child. In contrast, when he, Elisha got there, he acted on him and he came back to life. The Prophet called Gehazi again and told him to call the woman. In this way, her baby was returned alive. It is interesting to note the level of involvement Elisha shown to Gehazi in his ministry. This indeed is the way genuine mentorship should be practiced. Thus, Prophet Elisha was a great mentor per excellent. At this juncture, we proceed to examine more of the nuances or elements in the above encounter.

In spite of Elisha’s respect and appreciation for the woman’s magnanimity toward them, on sighting her, based on the principle of inclusiveness or

involvement being strictly observed by Elisha, he did not take it upon himself to go to her. Rather, he sent Gehazi to do so with an instruction to interrogate her (v. 26). Yet, he did not feel that as the master, he should know first before Gehazi why the woman was coming to him. He also did not assume that it could be for an issue Gehazi should not know about at all. This further strengthens his deep sense of openness and integrity. However, Gehazi sufficiently played his part when he attempted to loosen her hold from the Prophet (v. 27). J. M. Ward (1962:361) describes Gehazi's attempt as an act of disrespect with emphasis that, he is "primarily known however for his dispassionate rudeness to the woman on the occasion of her appeal to Elisha on behalf of her dead son (4:27)." One sees it from a different perspective of seeking to protect his master instead of just being rude to the woman. Elisha's calm and empathic response "Leave her alone, for she is in better distress..." (v. 27, ESV) may attest to this opinion. It is also considered as an execution of his duty as a responsible and protective servant. Moreover, it may not be seen as an act of eye-service but of one that issues from a heart of commitment or dedication to a person.

Nevertheless, Elisha indeed stopped him as a demonstration of empathy and respect for the woman in the face of difficulty. In the same vein, he was not ashamed to be roughed. He also did it to prevent a crisis between the woman and Gehazi. Thus, he chooses to bear the consequences of his compassion for the pains of the woman instead of allowing the situation to go the wrong way. Therefore, mentorship is not the formation of a clique, camp or caucus to beat, revenge, defend or attack those who are considered as opponents (Don Akhilomen, 2018; Timothy Olu Aibinoumo, 2018). A mentor should be able to restrain his or her mentee from getting involved in acts of trouble, disrespect, crisis, untruthfulness and disloyalty, negativity against anyone and any group even when he or she is being offended or hurt. He or she should also always objectively and not subjectively seek for justice and due process at every given time.

Elisha discloses to Gehazi in the presence of the woman that he had no pre-knowledge from God about the illness and death of the child (v. 27). This was an expression of humility, truthfulness, openness and straightforwardness. Mentors should be honest. They should avoid hypocrisy and not claim to know or see everything thereby playing God. By practice and instruction where necessary as did Elisha, they should teach same to their students. Consequently, Elisha was down to earth honest before Gehazi and the woman not minding what any of them may feel about it toward him. It further strengthens his sense of righteousness, reliability, dedication and commitment to the service of God and man. This in itself is an act of holiness being "the pursuit of righteousness through faith...to

overcome sin" (M. M. Oboh, 2012; 320). Moreover, the woman never at anytime took it as something to cause her to humiliate him. It never reduced her respect for him nor does it ever causes a decline of his integrity before her. But for his sincerity she regarded him the more. It was only Gehazi who sought to take advantage of this against him at a later time to his own ruin.

Meanwhile, Elisha did not withdraw from involving Gehazi in all he does and to make him learn all that he should. Therefore, he gave him his cloak and asked him to get ready and go ahead of him with seriousness to the woman's house and put the cloak on the dead child (v. 29). It was only by the urging of the woman that he decided to follow after him (v. 30). Notice that, Elisha did not only get Gehazi involved, he trusted him with his instruments and confidence to operate on his behalf. This is another way a person builds himself in another by allowing and giving opportunity for application of lessons taught. It is a right process of preparing capable successors. This indeed is mentorship.

Gehazi was not successful like Samuel. However, Elisha gave him the privilege to practice and attempt the application of his training. In the spirit of mentoring, he did not waste time on attending to the child though he was not successful. Yet, he came back in the same manner to report to Elisha of his inability to effect life into the boy (v. 31). But the Bible at this point has no account as to why he was unable to do so. However, in reference to the Scriptures, action without faith cannot prevail (Ja. 2:26, 1:6-8). Moreover, holiness which is abstinence from evil must go with faith as well (Matt. 5:6, 8). These are some of the elements of the characteristics of Christian mentoring. A later outcome of Gehazi's life buttresses the absence of these qualities in him as possible reasons for his failure.

With the above analysis of the mentoring disposition of Elisha towards Gehazi, the concept of the effect or product of holiness and faithfulness becomes clear when the Prophet himself got to the child. He walked round and laid twice on him. With this, the baby came back to life (vv. 32-35). Again, we cannot fail to mention still that up to this time, Elisha did not relent in his inclusion of Gehazi in the affairs of his ministry. So, he urged him to call the woman and handed over the child back to her (v. 38). He could have avoided or be annoyed with him in one way or the other because of the failure of his attempt. But he was tolerant on his weakness. Christians need to bear with each other's shortcomings and failures as they work and relate together.

However, another episode opens that shows off Gehazi's true spiritual life as a reason why he did not succeed in reviving the woman's son. This time, it

was not with the woman but through the healing of Naaman and the means of appreciation he brought to the Prophet (2 Kg. 5:1- 27). Naaman was really honest in his desire to give a present to Elisha. He confessed his knowledge and faithfulness to God. He vowed never to worship idol anymore but God alone. In preparation for this, he even sought from Elisha to take a parcel of soil from Israel on which to build an altar to God in his home at Damascus (Marshall Shilley et al eds. 2003:514). Yet, Elisha kept his word not to accept something from him. In goodwill, he dispersed him with prayer: "Go in peace" (vv. 16-17, 19, NIV).

As usual, Elisha did not keep Gehazi away from hearing the contents of his discussion with Naaman. But he did not invite him into it because it was a decision binding on both of them, a deal between the two (the Prophet and Naaman alone) and no one else. His act was also a compliance with the Scriptures, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8, NIV).

Therefore, Christians must endeavour not to run ministry as a business concern, but as God's care to the people. Thus, materialism has no place in the service of God. The ministry is about the joy, care, wellbeing and blessings of humanity and the glory of God. It is a people oriented service and not for the satisfaction of self as in the focus of materialism (M. M. Oboh, 2008:215f). But contrary to this, Gehazi could not resist the temptation to let go the material gifts which Naaman had brought with him to be offered to the man of God. It is important also to note that Naaman came with the gifts right as he was coming to seek healing from the prophet and not an afterthought. It was and still a practice with the consultation of idolatrous priests in which gifts are given to entice or make them willing to appease the gods on behalf of the client. This was the motive Naaman had when preparing to come to Elisha because he was already used to it as was the practice in his traditional religious background (v. 18).

Of course, as would be expected of a true servant of God, Elisha turned it down in contrast to the system in idolatry. But Gehazi due to his own weaknesses could not conform to the choice of his master. He went out on his way to pursue Naaman in disguise of the master's opinion to obtain some huge amount of money and clothing from him. Thus, he condemned the action of the Prophet: "My master was too easy on Naaman... by not accepting from him what he brought" (v. 20, NIVQSB). Furthermore, he told a lie against him and the guild of the prophets: "My master sends me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to us from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing'" (v. 22, NIVQSB). Instead of a talent Naaman gave him several of it in two

bags in addition to two sets of clothing. Moreover, he respectfully sent two of his servants to help him carry them. Gehazi further manipulated the process by stopping them at a distance from the house. He took the load and sent them back to their master. Thereafter, he hid the goods away somewhere in the house from Elisha (vv. 19-24).

Nevertheless, he had the effrontery to come before his master as if nothing had happened. But he confronted him with a question and emphasis by calling his name, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" (v.25, NIVQSB). Worse still, he lied he had gone nowhere. Then the prophet replied,

Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes, olive grove, vineyard, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservant? (v.26, NIVQSB).

There are some striking revelations here. Now, Gehazi took Elisha for granted. He thought because of his openness, simplicity, his deep sense of humility and the ignorance he suffered in their encounter with the shunammite woman and her dead child, he would not know anything he has done. So, he lied to him that he has gone nowhere at all. But a very striking disclosure occurs when the prophet told him he saw when Naaman got down from his chariot to meet him. It will be recalled that verse 21 actually records that on noticing Gaezi running after him, Naaman came down from his chariot and greeted him.

At this juncture, it is obvious that humility, openness and straightforwardness are not weaknesses as some people may count them to be. For the same reason as in the case of Gehazi, there are those who prey on persons with these qualities. This was precisely what he did. Similar to what Gehazi did but in contrast to the erroneous belief and ill-treatment being perpetrated against people who are honest, what they really possess is their strength and victory over those who sought to harm them as a result.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Elisha did not completely denounce the idea of receiving a present as a mark of appreciation for services rendered by a man or servant of God. But the situation demands the application of wisdom to determine whether it should be received or not at a particular time or the other. Elisha expresses this view in lamentation against his servant,

"Didn't my heart break as the man was turning from his chariot to greet you? Is now the time to receive money? To receive clothes? And olive groves, vineyards, sheep, oxen, servants, or female attendants?" (2 Kg. 5:26; ISV)

This corresponds with the Scriptures that, “There is a time for everything” (Ec. 3:1 NIVQSB).

Gehazi was stunned with the prophet’s disclosure of exactly what happened between him and Naaman. The Scriptures stress in relation that obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sa. 15:22). Gehazi’s actions were completely out of tune with the concept of mentoring. In contrast to his feeling about the Prophet being too easy (v. 20), and giving the severity of his offence, Elisha did not hesitate at this time to serve him with discipline: “Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever” (v. 27, NIVQSB). Instantly, he became indeed leprous, “... as white as snow” (v. 27, NIVQSB).

This was an additional evidence of the power of God in the Prophet and the status of holiness he kept. When this is weighed against the backdrop of the fact that he was not aware of the sickness and death of the Shunammite woman’s son until she came to tell him, it shows that a man only knows what God chooses to reveal. No one can dictate to Him. Consequently, those who play God do so at their own peril.

Elisha’s discipline on Gehazi is an act of training. Mentorship does not exclude discipline where needed and necessary. It is like the Scriptures rightly put it: “Do not withhold discipline from a child save his soul from death” (Pr. 23:13-14, NIVQSB). Those who cannot speak the truth in love or take the right course of action in an event even if it means going against the wish or expectations of others though they be friends in order to avoid hurting their feelings when they are wrong or going astray are not prepared for Christian mentorship. They are pleasing and self-serving instead of God and to help humanity. Thus, Christian mentoring must be seen and taken as an act of service to the Lord. The mentor and mentee should be honest to each other no matter how humanly bitter it may be. This is the only way they can fulfill the goal of Christian mentorship.

Whether Gehazi learnt his lessons or not will be determined by the events that followed later. Beginning with chapter eight of 2 Kings verse 1, it is recorded that the Prophet advised the woman to take her family and depart from the land of Shunem because of an impending famine on it. She heeded and left. For seven years, she and her family dwelt in Philistine. When the famine was over, they returned to their homeland. By this time, her land and house had been taken over. She appealed to the King to retrieve them. Gehazi who had come under the services of the king was present with him when she brought her case. Fortunately, he served as a witness to her. Upon his testimony giving the account of the miracle surrounding her child as evidence and many other things done by the

Prophet as well as her hospitality, the king ordered that all her properties be returned. The king also gave instruction for the accrued rent for the seven years period to be paid back to her and it was done (2 Kg. 8:1-6).

It is obvious here that indeed, goodness beget righteousness just as sin is retributive. Could it be that Elisha was foreseeing this incident when he requested from the woman if they could talk to the king or the commander of the army on her behalf? (2 Kg. 4:11-12). It is possible. But he did not disclose the basis of that request which now seem to become a reality.

However, no mention of Gehazi was ever made as continuing in service with the Prophet after Naaman’s leprosy was imposed on him. It appears Elisha left him in Shunem because of the incident of his outrageous disloyalty and disobedience. Therefore, it is not certain if Gehazi later learnt his lessons in terms of changing from his unbelief to having faith in God and living a clean life of obedience, loyalty and service. However, information exist that shows his association with the King of Shunem having left the Prophet as earlier discussed. How they came together could be inferred as shown below.

It was possible that because the Prophet was constantly in that region of Shunem and the signs and wonders he wrought there, his fame was in the land. The King could have also learnt how Elisha had prophesied the famine on the basis of which he counseled the woman and her family to leave for the time it would last. This must have endeared Gehazi being a former servant of the Prophet to the King as well. So, working on the popularity, power and good disposition of the Prophet, Gehazi became an adviser to the King in spite of his disassociation with Elisha.

But why did the Prophet abandon Gehazi? It is clear from the onset that Gehazi was known to be very dutiful. He went on errands for the Prophet (2 Kg. 4:12, 14, 25-26, 29, 31, 36). Nonetheless, there was no single trace of spirituality to his person. Elisha gave him the privilege to apply himself to it but he could not and never did (2 Kg. 4:29-31). Rather, the major things he did in his association with the Prophet were only to cheat, lie, manipulate, amass wealth, hypocritical and destructive of his master’s character, secretive, and subtle (2 Kg. 5:20-25). It was a clear implication that he was not fit for the ministry. Thus, Elisha could not hesitate to drop him.

Consequently, the principle of Christian mentoring demands that the ministry is not a place where everything and anybody goes. Also it should not be treated as a secular business concern or career. Instead, it is meant for those who are called by God and have thus, chosen to surrender their will to His service

in body, spirit and soul, physically, spiritually and intellectually, in choice and taste. As a result, those proven not fit should not be covered or skulked up. They should be helped off the ministry.

The baseline to meeting with the requirements of the principle of Christian mentorship is the conversion to Christ. This is what a Christian builds on whether as a minister or practicing Christian man or woman. It was lacking in Gehazi as shown above. As a result of the Prophet's sincerity, commitment and spirituality, he could not keep Gehazi but to let him go. Nevertheless, he availed himself of the Prophet's popularity, fame and respect by returning to Shunem where he found a place in the service of the King (2 Kg. 8:3-6).

Evaluation of the Role of the Mentees and their Mentors

In addition to the above discuss, it is necessary to particularly bring out some traits that count as strengths and weaknesses in the major characters in the paper. This would help to harness them properly as per the qualities to uphold and pitfalls to avoid in Christian mentorship.

Samuel's Strengths and Weaknesses

Samuel exhibits so much strength as a mentee. By this, he stands out as one that must be emulated. He starts and continues well. From the beginning of his relationship with the mentor, he shows a high level of acceptance. He blends with the faith, service and worship of God. He had no reservation in his willingness to obey the Lord. Moreover, he was conscious of what befits him as someone in training for God's purpose. Thus, he knew what he wanted to be and what it takes to get it realized.

Therefore, he disassociates himself from the prevailing corruption and other ills of the society and of his master's children. He held tenaciously to chastity and prudence. He did not under-mind his age. He was docile from home and imbibes the godly training bequeathed on him by his parents and thereafter by Eli. Thus, his parents particularly the mother were his first mentors. He was highly committed to God before he knew Him personally. His persistency did not wane after his experience of the Lord. He persists in obedience and faithfulness. He was always prepared to listen, hear and to execute God's order, directives and instructions. He loves and respects Eli but fears God. From childhood, he applied himself to being obedient and submissive.

Matthew Henry (286) shares the opinion that Samuel was industrious in serving God. Proceeding further, he opines that,

It was an aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons that the child Samuel shamed them. They

rebelled against the Lord, but Samuel ministered to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them; he ministered before Eli, under his eye and direction. Those are fittest to rule who have learnt to obey.

Samuel sleeps in a place not far from Eli's room so he could respond with ease in case the old man needs something at night. While "his own sons were a grief to him, his little servitor was his joy."

J. Barr (1963:881-882) relates that Samuel functions in different capacities as a prophet, seer, and as a sacrificial intercessor. In the real sense, he was a judge, a guardian and interpreter of divine law. He went through the great sanctuaries in Israel. His sons served along with him as his colleagues. They also succeeded him. But he suffered a similar fate like Eli his predecessor. His sons led with corruption causing Israel's demand for a monarchical government. Nevertheless, Samuel is

seen as destined to be the last of the 'judges' and the human mediator to Israel of the origin of the kingship and its messianic line, along with the dark and mysterious choice and rejection of the first king and the ambiguity of the Divine judgment of the kingdom.

In view of this, David's commitment and success may perhaps be traced to the result of the impact of Samuel's mentorship. He chose David on behalf of God and anointed him as king. David in his flight from Saul took refuge with Samuel at Ramah (1 Sa. 16:1-13; 19:18). Thus, Samuel was good both as a protégé and mentor.

Gehazi's Strengths and Weaknesses

Gehazi's weaknesses outweigh his strengths. Nevertheless, he was remarkable for some few abilities. He was very dutiful. He dashed to respond to his master's instructions. He had a sharp counseling acumen. Sometimes, he was considerate and respectful.

However, he was overzealous and could not control his excesses. He was hypocritical, disobedient and pretentious. His spiritual inclination was close to nothing. Thus, he had no fear of God. He gives Him no place in his scheme of things. There was no single act of faith or belief in the Lord that was traced to him. Moreover, materialism was the centre of his thought, action and purpose. Consequently, he manipulates, lies and cheats.

Matthew Henry (407) portrays him as a base fellow. He declares that Elisha's servant would have been expected to be a saint. However, he notes that "...even Christ himself had a Judas among his

followers.” He further affirms that the love of money was central to his sin and failure. Consequently,

He blamed his master for refusing Naaman’s present, envied and grudged his kindness and generosity to this stranger....When Naaman alighted from his chariot to meet him..., he told him a deliberate lie, that his master sent him to him.... He abused his master, and basely misrepresented him to Naaman as one that had soon repented of his generosity.

Gehazi’s was more interested in material things and money than in the purpose of his training with Elisha. Thus, with treachery, he got them especially the money which he hopes to buy land and cattle. He desires to set up for himself a concern he chooses to live and depend on after leaving Elisha. But he was punished with the leprosy of Naaman. “Thus, he is stigmatised and made infamous, and carries the mark of his shame wherever he goes” (407). As a result, though he got what he needed, yet he lost his health, honour, peace, and gainful service.

J. S. Wright (1986:408) also expresses that Gehazi obtains Naaman’s gifts with false pretences for himself. But assumes he was cured of the leprosy disease and was thereafter restored as Elisha’s servant. It is obvious from the above that Matthew Henry does not hold this opinion. That Gehazi was found talking with the king does not imply that he was cured and restored back to his services with Elisha. Nevertheless, he stresses that, “The law did not forbid all conversation with lepers, but only dwelling with them” (410). He also opines that as at the time of this incident there were no priests in Israel. So, the king by himself or someone appointed by him to assess the lepers and make judgment on them could have been the source through which Gehazi had come to him (410). What is very clear here is that his presence with the king was useful to the Shunammite woman’s providential retrieval of her home and properties.

M. A. Macleod (1982:423) agreeing with Matthew Henry claims that “Gehazi’s punishment was immediate and permanent leprosy, extending even to his descendants.” He was never thereafter mentioned by name except in 2 kings 8:1-6. It was also only in this place he appears in favourable light when he was summoned by the king. Thus, he gave a true narrative of Elisha to King Jehoram. Conversation was not forbidding between lepers and others. Moreover, Gehazi’s leprosy is not the type of disease that is now known as leprosy. It is possible also that the perpetuity of his sentence was removed because of being penitent. However, this is only a presupposition though with no clear evidence for it. Still, he evaluates Gehazi’s offence as a show of the decadence of his moral character. His actions were a cause of the Syrian, Naaman to impugn on the holiness of Yahweh and of

His servant, Elisha. Consequently, Naaman could have interpreted Gehazi’s lie against him as a measure of covetousness.

J. K. Kelso and W. D. Mcmchardy (1962:318-319) give a striking observation about Gehazi’s hard heartedness, impenitence and refusal to repent. They posit that later Jewish writings claim that Gehazi denies the resurrection of the dead. This view is believed to be the reason why he could not dispense with the staff of the Prophet over the Shunammite woman’s dead son (2 Kg. 4:31). In addition to this was “that the four lepers who entered the Syrian camp during the siege of Samaria and found it deserted (2 K 7) were Gehazi and his sons.” Moreover, a tradition has it that “Elisha went to Gehazi at Damascus to persuade him to repent but was unsuccessful.” In spite of this, a “Later Jewish thought considered that Elisha’s treatment of his servant had been too severe.”

These materials nonetheless, contain some basic ideas in understanding the detail background disposition of Gehazi’s characters. They serve as additional evidences for accepting that he was never returned to Elisha. Moreover, the feelings of Elisha’s action as being too much is not justifiable. Besides, a judgment like this amounts to complacency, impunity and a compromise that are inimical to genuine Christianity, holiness and godliness. This is why it is necessary to advise that those who are not fit for the ministry should not be kept hidden as it does more harm than to further the cause of Christ.

Eli’s Strength and Weaknesses

Eli was faithful. He feared God and was willing to hear Him speak. He tries not to hinder God’s decision and will. As a mentor, he receives Samuel without reservation. He taught him with commitment and hard work. In spite of his old age, he did not compromise his position as a prophet with the corrupt practices of his time. He did not withhold truth and knowledge. He was lovely and kind. He guides with diligence. He made himself available to Samuel. He had access to him irrespective of the number of times he sought to reach him even at odd times.

Nevertheless, Eli pampered his children to a fault. He did not handle them with strict caution. He treated them with complacency and impunity. What he failed to achieve in his children he accomplished in Samuel. In spite of Samuel’s awareness of God’s displeasure and rejection of his lineage from the priesthood, along with the plan to punish his household for its sins, he did not develop hatred toward him. Thus, he was sincere enough to have accepted his own wrong, the fate of his family, and was not envious of Samuel’s fortune.

Matthew Henry (285) stresses that Eli was too gentle on his children. He did not threaten them as he should. He never even punished them for their insolence and impiety. God reproves him sharply through a prophet (1 Sa. 2:27f). The message was intended to cause him to repent for his salvation. G. T. Manley (1986:318) corroborates this view with the information that Eli was of the lineage of Ithamar who was Aaron's youngest son. His children were scandalous in their conduct but he rebuked them ineffectively. God's pronouncement of their rejection and doom was only confirmed by the revelation given to Samuel after it was first declared by a prophet (1 Sa. 2:27-30, 3:11-14). Thus, his forty years of meritorious service "was marred by the sinful sacrilege of his sons, and by his failure to eject them from their sacred office."

C. Grant (1982:61) posits that Eli had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas over which he lose control. They were licentious and profaned with their priestly office. Consequently, they earned for themselves the tag of the "men of Belia" (worthlessness). Eli could not administer stern discipline on them. Rather, he chided gently with their greed and immorality. He got a warning via a prophet that his attitude toward the corruption of his children would cost him "the downfall of his house and the death of both of his sons in one day (1 Sa. 2:27-36)." The message was confirmed through Samuel by a direct revelation from God (3:11f). It was fulfilled not long at the invasion of the Philistine. Israel was routed, the ark was captured, Hophni and Phinehas were slain along. On hearing the news Eli fell over from the seat at the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died (4:18).

However, the sincerity and devotion of Eli cannot be doubted. But he was a man, a father and a priest lacking in firmness. It appears from the narrative and history that he was "a good man, full of humility and gentleness, but weak and indulgent. He is (was) always overshadowed by some more commanding or interesting figure" (61). Among other things as included in the above, R. W. Corney (1962:85) traces Eli's family to the ancient priesthood at Shiloh. W. O. E. Oesterley and E. R. Rowlands (1963:241) also support Grants submission but add that Eli was a quiet listener.

Elisha's Strength and Weaknesses

Elisha was indeed a mentor par excellence. He is one of the best mentors known in the history of the prophets. He took after his master's (Elijah) ministry (1 Kg. 19:16, 19f, 2 Kg. 2:1-19). He did his best to impact himself on Gehazi as he had from Elijah. But he was not submissive to him. They were not of the same spirit and character. Thus, Gehazi lost out of mentorship. Elisha demonstrates high sense of techniques, skills and

ability for Christian mentorship. It is difficult to trace any weakness in Elisha.

There is no doubt Elisha was strong in his commitment and holiness. He was an epitome of godliness, full of humility, love, truthfulness, honesty and sincerity. He exhibits a high sense of integrity, chastity, appreciation, open-mindedness and correction as well as self-controlled. He avoids conflict in every way possible, never pretentious and connives not.

He makes himself always available and receptive to Gehazi. He puts him at equal level with his personality. He involves him in his ministry. He causes him to speak and act on his behalf with respect. He endeavours to make the best out of him; never attempts to take advantage of him or to use him to serve his own interest. He listens with understanding and importance. He was empathetic, decent in character and relationship.

Elisha never exploits anybody. He was bold and fearless, approaches authorities and rulers. He was proactive, caring and pursues righteousness; holistically dedicates and commits himself to God. Moreover, Elisha was a trustworthy prophet, reliable and tolerant. He was consistent, contented and not materialistic; never claims knowledge of what he does not know. He trivializes no issue. Thus, his approach to mentoring stands firm as a model for Christian mentorship. Though he loves, yet, he disciplines with strictness wherever necessary.

B. L. Smith (1986:322) asserts that Elisha was a 9th century prophet in Israel. He was of a wealthy family background. He remains in the services of his master (Elijah) until he was translated (1 Kg. 19:21; 2 Kg. 3:11). He succeeded his master when a double portion of his spirit was transferred on him (2 Kg. 2:1-18). Though Elisha was of the 9th century, however, he belongs to the prophetic tradition that produced the 8th century rhapsodists or writing prophets.

He was affined to the ecstatic prophet of the 11th century. He bears some similarity with Samuel by the possession of the gift of knowledge, foresight and the capacity to work miracles.

Moreover, Elisha was the head of some prophetic schools. He had a home in Samaria (2 Kg. 6:32). Yet, like Samuel he was constantly moving around cities and places because of the much demand on him for his ministry. He had "easy access into royal courts and peasant dwellings" (322). His relationship with Elijah is suggestive of Moses and Joshua's companionship. In the same vein, while "Elijah's ministry is reproduced in John the Baptist..." 'Elisha's directly anticipates the miracle-aspect of the ministry of Jesus is even more significant'" (322).

J. H. Stek (1982:70) asserts that Elisha (my God saves) like Elijah his predecessor did not marry. He was only accompanied by Gehazi his servant. He was wholly dedicated to God and to Elijah. He never declined from his sense of commitment. He had no fear of anyone (2 Kg. 3:13f; 5:10-12; 6:32). He was firm in his decisions and held in high regard.

S. Szikszai (1962:92) expresses the profoundness of Elisha's reputation. The testimonies of his works present him "in a more than human role; he towers over the anonymous members of the prophetic guilds." Indeed, he was a beloved leader of the guilds. They lovely remember him for his greatness, piety, and willingness to help. Elisha fulfilled the legacy of his master (1 Kg. 19:15-18). He had a strong impact on the history of Israel. So much that Szikszai declares in his favour that,

If modern scholarship does not pay the same lavish tribute to his greatness as his disciples did, his influence upon the history of Israel can hardly be questioned. He represents, in its initial state, the prophetic attitude which claimed the right to mold the nation's fate by proclaiming the Lord's will.

The above presentations are evident of the extent of Elisha devotion to the seriousness of his ministry. It also depicts the bases and the level of his commitment to the work of mentorship as he tries to infuse but unsuccessfully into Gehazi. It substantiates the fact that the reasons for Gehazi's failure are completely attributable to himself alone. He was a human being and not a robot. Thus, he was solely responsible and in control of his mind and no one else with him. He determines what he does and how he goes about it. However, he was liable to discipline and punishment. Though, he got it, yet, he did not change from being wayward. Moreover, Elisha in keeping with his integrity did not compromise with him.

Enhancement for Contemporary Christian Mentoring and Development

Mentorship is not new in the history of Christianity. It is an age long biblical practice. For example, Moses had mentorship experience with Jethro. He stayed with him, pastured his flocks and married his daughter, Zipporah. He left Midian under Jethro's supervision to answer God's call to deliver his people from servitude in Egypt (M. M. Oboh and B. I. Oboh, 2018: 9). Esther was mentored by her uncle Mordecai (Es. 2:5-7, 15, 19-20). Likewise, Elisha had his preparation with Elijah (1kg. 19:19-21; 2Kg. 2:1-14).

Mentoring was an established process of training for the prophets (2 Kg. 2:5, 7, 15-18). Jesus used it in His relationship and training of the disciples. The early church adopted it just as the patriarchs,

judges, and prophets. Barnabas mentored Paul and John Mark. Thus, according to M. M. Oboh (2010:30)

...he made something out of those who were regarded as nothing and gave meaning to those whose lives were meaningless. Some of such persons were Paul and Mark (Acts 9:27, 28; 11:25-26; 12:25; Gal. 2:1f)... Paul had difficulty being accepted by the early believers in Jerusalem after his conversion. This was as a result of the persecution and torture he melted out on them as a fanatical Jewish unbeliever in Christ. But he had his dramatic conversion in Damascus where he had gone to arrest some Christians and he became one of them. Immediately, after this encounter, he started with the work of the ministry. He proclaimed the reality of Jesus as indeed the Messiah (the saviour of mankind). Thus, he became an enemy of the unbelieving Jews who had supported him against the Christians. They also sought to kill him but with the aid of the Christians he escaped and came back to Jerusalem. He attempted to join the believers in it but they refused to allow him come to them. They doubted the authenticity of his conversion. As a result of which they feared and rejected him (Acts 9:1-26).

In contrast to them, Barnabas believed in him. He embraced and accepted his companionship. He brought and introduced him to others as a fellow believer and partner in the ministry. He confirmed the reality of his conversion to them. Through his persuasion, the Jerusalem Church absolved him. With this acceptance, he had a sense of belonging, courage and protection. Therefore, he had the boldness to continue to preach about Christ (Acts 9:27-28).

.... The attitude of Barnabas as an encourager and builder of others also shows itself in his relationship with John Mark (Acts 13:4-5). He did not allow Mark to remain at the level of servitude. He provided him with the rear privilege to grow and develop himself as he did with Paul....

Paul in turn serves as a mentor to Silas and Timothy (Ac. 15:36-41; 1 Ti. 1:2, 18, 6:11, 20; 2 Ti. 1:2, 3; 4:9).

In contrast to the above phenomenon in the early church, mentorship is scanty and not well known in modern church. There is also no conscious effort with a guide and wide spread knowledge as to its practice. Besides, there are no specific materials directly available to teach, address or encourage on the issue with the purpose of harnessing it to groom members and leaders of the church for its immediate and future needs. To this end, this paper contains lessons in preparation towards an improved Christian mentorship and development.

The paper depicts Eli, Samuel, Elisha and others who have applied themselves usefully to the process of mentorship as representing the ideal situations and roles of the mentor and mentee. Among the main characters studied only Gehazi who though had one of the best processes of mentoring also under a famous mentor (Elisha), lost out completely. A similar incident occurred when Demas committed apostasy and abandoned Paul to go to Thessalonica in search of mundane things (2 Ti. 4:9-10). The worse of such persons in the biblical category of those who could not apply themselves successfully to the course of mentorship is Judas. Despite his defection, he was treacherous against Jesus. In spite of Jesus' innocence, love and the noble treatment He had on him, yet, he conspired, betrayed Him with a kiss and also sold Him at the cost of a slave to be crucified. Thus, it became evident that Judas values Jesus as not more than a slave (Mt. 26:15). On this note, these persons are examples of wrong models in mentorship whose approaches must be avoided.

Therefore, it is necessary to reiterate that contemporary church should emulate the standard of mentoring seen in the key personalities, Eli, Samuel, Elisha and so on to prepare and develop Christians and leaders for its wellbeing, appropriate service and efficient ministries. With regards to the process of utilization, the church can as well begin to apply the practice of mentoring in its training of old and new converts using various programme of discipleship both at elementary and advance stages. Mentoring can be organized formally and informally. Esther and Mordecai's case has shown that it can be arranged across sexes. Of course, there were women among those mentored by Jesus. Martha, Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene were some of them. They availed themselves of the privileges they had in Jesus (Lk. 10:38-39; Jn. 20:18).

At institutional level, mentoring can be applied as a process of paternalism, serving as an adviser, project supervisor, examiner, and so on. In all cases, adequate information and caution in terms of a person's faith, commitment, maturity and integrity are to be exercised in practice, pairing or fixing persons for mentorship as well as in selecting a mentor or mentee. In view of the above, there is no gainsaying that contemporary church needs a reawaken approach to mentorship like was done in the early church and in other biblical times. This would boost the strength of the lifestyle and spirituality of its members. In each case, to achieve optimum result, every element and principle of mentorship as enunciated in the study and more should be prayerfully applied.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing is a digest of some extracts of the practice of mentorship as contained in the Scriptures

with particular references to the two instances of Samuel and Gehazi as mentees. Also considered along with them are the contents of Eli and Elisha ministries as mentors. Several lessons and approaches have been drawn that are considered necessary for contemporary church's awareness and application of mentorship. Supportive references were obtained touching on the positive and negative sides of it. Samuel's role as a worthy protégé was substantiated by the gainful activities of Elisha at his time under the training of Prophet Elijah. In other words, both of them had successful mentorship career as mentees. They also did well as mentors.

The school of thought that sees Elisha being too strict on Gehazi is not fair on him. It is also not mindful of the weaknesses of Eli and the repercussion of it when compared with Elisha with regard to their responses toward the sinfulness and failure of their mentees. The scenario should serve as a lesson and reason to commend Elisha for his decisive action that serves as a deterrent. Due to his nature and laudable service, "wherever Elisha resided as many as could of the sons of the prophets flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions..." (Matthew Henry, 407). Therefore, his trustworthy, fearless, bold, strong, love, kind and firm qualities as well as his sense of commitment, contentment and uncompromising characters that attracted people to him should be emulated. In contrast, Eli was not only weak he was also indulgent. David was located as a product of Samuel's mentoring. Others that were also successful as products of mentorship were Moses, Esther, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and Martha, other disciples of Jesus and Timothy as well as Paul, John Mark and so on.

Gehazi's life was an instance of an avoidable negativity in mentorship. His practices as harmful as they were are replicated by Demas and worsen by the function of Judas's ill treatment of Jesus. A striking aspect of the instance of these three persons who could not make it in mentorship was that they were inclined towards evil, self and ungodliness. Moreover, the tendency towards materialism was present in each of them. Consequently, Christians should beware of these vices as hindrances against mentoring and successful Christian life in general as well as to warn against the danger of sin. Also visible in the three is the nature and extent to which the liberty or free will available to the mentee in mentorship can be abused and miss-applied. Thus, it should be noted that as in every other duty, mentorship demands a sense and commitment to responsibility.

On the basis of the specific characters in the study Elisha was excellent in his role as a mentor. He shows extraordinary prowess in the art of mentoring. Nevertheless, Eli was not found wanting in his handling

of Samuel. Though, he was judged to have failed in the training of his children, and possibly as a lesson from it, he did well with him. Though he was ordinarily weak but he teaches a lesson of the importance of listening which was one of his strengths. However, Samuel on his part, and somehow as an answer to prayer, had innate or inspired commitment to obedience. Moreover, he possesses a corrigible attitude from childhood. Jethro, Mordecai, Barnabas and Paul were sited among prominent mentors as well.

The reference to Jesus in the class of mentors is not to place him at equivalent point with others. It is simply on the basis of His recognition in the context of mentors with significant outcome. Otherwise, as the Lord, He stands at no less or equal level with no one. His numerous and unquantifiable works in the Gospels attest to the fact of this opinion. Therefore, in reality He is the Master and Author of mentors. Thus, "The" Mentor and not a mentor (M. M. and B. I. Oboh, 2018:31f).

In support of this conviction, D. L. Bock (1992:206) says that,

In the one direct Gospel reference to Elisha, he is mentioned with Elijah as sharing a period of miraculous ministry—a time like that of Jesus (Lk 4:27). Jesus mentions the Naaman incident, which pictures a ministry to Gentiles in a period of Israelite rejection, as a warning not to reject him as Israel had rejected Elisha (and Elijah).

Numerous events in Jesus' ministry bear similarity with the prophetic activity of Elisha. Jesus' ministry was introduced by a predecessor. He ministered in Galilee and Samaria, a ministry that included a concern for the poor ... and outcast. Most of all, his miracles are similar to Elisha's. Jesus heals and raises a widow's only son (Lk 7:11-17,...). These connections show Jesus functioning at a level equal to and surpassing one of the most powerful of the OT prophets.

In view of this study, for effective and adequate Christian mentorship, both mentor and mentee must give themselves to the acts of faithfulness and godliness. They should be committed to mutual love and respect as well as value, dignity, integrity and equal treatment for humanity. It is not to be applied with charges and payment. Rather, it has to be operated on the basis of service and companionship. A conscious relationship in which individuals are honest and truthful to one another; correcting each other in love irrespective of the cost and implication; discipline as appropriate and with no intention to antagonize and harm suspected or self-acclaimed enemies. Moreover, they are to be lovely dedicated to the good of other people with no pretentious and deceptive tendencies in their mind, thinking, attitude and scheme of things.

Elisha's firm adherence among others to the rules and principles of mentorship with zero tolerance for abuse should be kept. Eli's weak, compromising tendencies, and lack of strict correction should be avoided. Therefore, individuals, organizations, institutions, and the church as a whole are encouraged to begin to look inward and forward in the basic pursuit of mentoring as a way of building a stronger church and universal Christian body.

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Biography

M. M. Oboh was born at Ibhole (Ibore) - Uneah, Irrua in Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, 31st March, 1967. He was brought up as a Muslim. Hence, the second of his initials stands for Musa, while the other is Michael being the first name. He got converted to Christianity on 7th June, 1986.

He attended Omoaka Primary School, Agbede in Etsako Central Local Government Area of Edo State, but finished at Okotie – Eboh Primary School, Sapele, Ethiopie Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria with a Primary School Leaving Certificate in 1978.

From there he proceeded to Essi College, Warri, Delta State where he had his Secondary School Leaving Certificate in 1984.

Thereafter, having received the call into the Gospel Ministry, he was admitted into the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria in 1992 and graduated with a BA (Bachelor of Arts degree in affiliation to the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria) in 1996, and B.Th (Bachelor of Theology in affiliation to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA) in 1996; M.Th (Master of Theology with Islamic Studies as major and minor in Systematic Theology also in affiliation to Southern, USA) in 2000; PhD in Theology and Christian Ethics as minor, NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008 and PhD in World Religions from the University of Jos,

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He was ordained into the full Gospel Ministry 29th September, 2002 and licensed to preach 1st June, 1996. He was a pastor to several churches, led at different ministerial positions, have several awards and honours. Moreover, he lectures at the Baptist College of Theology, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria since 2000 and served as the Rector from June, 2009 – June, 2020. He is a member of several academic societies and holds other positions at different ministerial and administrative responsibilities; promoted to the rank of a Reader/Associate Professor of Theology and Religious Studies October 1, 2018. He is married to Blessing Imalukho Oboh (nee Ehize). The marriage is blessed with a son, Michael Osemegbe Oboh.