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**HOW THE NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST NURTURES SOCIAL
WORKERS' FAITH AND CHARACTER**

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INTRODUCTION

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our own image, to be like us".....So God created human beings in his own image (Genesis 1:26 & 27).

As we strive to be like Christ, we are reminded that we are made in the image of God. Our time here on earth is for God's glory. Our purpose then becomes to love one another. We manifest that love in many ways. In one way, we as teachers show our students the way through modeling what is right; mentoring them to give them guidance and understanding; and mapping – giving them the map for the journey.

MODELING

Modeling is a complex process involving observation, imitation, and identification. Modeling occurs whether or not you intend it or not (Fox, 2001). It has to be in line with God's will. This is wisdom. It is 'the difference makes the difference'. Modeling helps the individuals enlarge their understanding of their world. It is the professional use of self. That is what we model. When we model what God has done in our lives, it reinforces and sustains our faith. It also lets others see what God is doing in our lives.

Within the context of professor and student, the professor is modeling behavior, expectations, and goals for the student by himself/herself engaging in those behaviors and that mindset. We are showing others how to have faith, how to practice faith, and the behavior that results from that faith. To understand how to model and the effects gained when we model, we must look at the life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Healing the Sick

Jesus came to earth and was here 33 years. In that time, he showed us how we were to live. He demonstrated with His life by how He treated and cared for people. He healed many who were sick. In Matthew 8, Jesus heals many. As crowds followed him, a man with leprosy asked Jesus to heal him and He did. Also in this chapter a Centurion asked for healing on behalf of his servant. The Centurion's servant was paralyzed. Because of the Centurion's faith, Jesus healed the servant. Further, when Jesus entered the home of Peter, He found Peter's mother was ill and also healed her. Matthew 8 outlines Jesus healing those who were brought to Him that were demon-possessed.

Jesus Raising People from the Dead.

The New Testament outlines many people raised from the dead including the widow's son at Nain. "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up. And began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:13-15). Jairus' daughter was also raised from the dead. "But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose" (Matthew 9:25). In John 11: 43-44 Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. "And He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said unto them, Loose him and let him go" (John 11:43-44).

He condemned sin and loved the sinner.

In John 8, the scribes and Pharisees test Jesus by bringing a woman to him who had been caught in the act of adultery. The scribes and Pharisees were tempting Jesus. While the woman who was caught in the act of adultery was brought to Jesus, the man was not. They also stated to Jesus that the Mosaic

Law required the woman be stoned to death. Executing the woman would be breaking Roman law. Not executing the woman would be breaking Jewish tradition. Jesus modeled what is right in the Word of God. He loved the sinner and hated the sin. His reaction was to those he was modeling for; the scribes and the Pharisees. He responds to them by saying, 'those who are without sin, let him cast the first stone'. In reaction, those who understood and got the lesson, walked away, convicted in their hearts that they were sinners to. Jesus had been looking down. When He looked up, all had walked away. Only the accused woman remained. Jesus asked her where were her accusers; those who had condemned her. She responded by telling Jesus she no longer had accusers or condemners, that they had all left. Jesus told her that He neither condemned her. He told her to "go and sin no more" (John 8: 1-11). This demonstrates Jesus modeling to the scribes and Pharisees several things:

- Not to convict those without looking at your own sin
- That all are sinners
- That you can teach and correct without condemning – differentiating between person and behavior

In John 4, Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman at a well, asking her for water. She, understanding the law and culture, asks Jesus why a Jewish man would talk to a Samaritan woman. It was a breaking of law (tradition) for Jewish men to interact with Samaritans. But, instead of dealing with the woman's response, He tells the woman that if she knew who HE was, she would have known that she should be asking Him for 'living water'; and that she would never thirst again. Initially, the woman didn't understand that Jesus was not talking about a physical water. Her response was to give her that water so that she could thirst no more and would not have to continue to come to the well to draw water. Jesus instructed the woman to go get her husband and come back. The woman told Jesus that she had

no husband to which He responded, 'yes you speak the truth, you have no husband'. Jesus continued telling her that she had 5 husbands, but that now she had none. The woman believed Jesus then to be a prophet because He had been able to tell her history. She understood and believed that the Messiah was coming and she would understand all things when He came. Jesus told her that He was the Messiah. Jesus talked with her about seeking the Father and worshiping Him in spirit and in truth. The woman left to go tell others about her meeting with the Messiah (John 4: 5-29).

Jesus modeled many things while here on earth. The three outlined above are:

- Healing the sick
- Raising the Dead
- Loving the sinner while condemning the sin

These three modeled behaviors give rise to what social work professors are teaching social work students to do with individuals. We can translate 'healing of the sick' into intervention with individuals who are battling many ills (i.e. drug addiction, mental illness, abuse, relationship dysfunction, etc.). Social work students learn to be the facilitators of healing for many individuals. We teach students to develop strategies for intervention. These strategies should be based on the modeled behavior of Jesus, who demonstrated the possibility of healing of those who are sick.

When we examine how Jesus raised many from the dead, we can also translate this modeled behavior into what social work professors teach social work students. To bring life again to that which is dead – how do social workers intervene in situations that look hopeless or with individuals, families, and communities who feel hopeless? Jesus modeled that through Him, all things are possible. It is then the responsibility of social work professors to teach student to always find ways to empower their clients

who feel the most hopeless; to give power to; to 'quicken' or to bring back to life. Traditionally, social work students are taught this through the strengths perspective; helping clients who have hopelessness in their spirits and helping them identify what they possess that can bring back life to what may on the outside appear to be a hopeless situation.

Jesus loved the sinner while condemning the sin. As social work professors, we help social work students learn to intervene successfully and effectively with individuals who have the most challenging behaviors, challenges, and history; not to be judgmental, but to help individuals overcome behaviors and situation that are self-destructive or destructive to others.

MENTORING

The purpose of mentoring is that both mentor and mentee learn. Learning on the part of both mentor and mentee grounds the work of mentoring. Real, true, genuine learning is a process of exploration and discovery. It requires collaboration between the mentoring partners and a safe environment that honors the mentee's integrity and learning style. In this paradigm, mentor and mentee travel a parallel journey.

Jesus as Mentor

Using the metaphor of the journey can explain Jesus' mentoring style and approach. Jesus mentored at four levels as he led people on their journey to Him. The way He did this was to preach to the multitudes. Jesus taught His disciples and he trained the apostles. He actually mentored the chosen three or what is referred to as his inner circle: Peter, John, and James.

Jesus' mentoring approach came out of where each individual were in his or her spiritual development. Amen (1990) described the ten spheres of spiritual development. (See Amen for a

description of the ten spheres of spiritual development.) Four of the spiritual spheres will illustrate where a group or individual is in their spiritual development. What follows is a description of the four levels of spiritual development and how Jesus mentored based on where people were in that development. The primary group that Jesus mentored to was the multitudes. Mark 6:34 states that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. See Keller (2007) who provides a comprehensive view of how sheep are unable to take care of themselves and how the shepherd does this. The crowd in Mark 6 functioned at a level Amen describes as 'physical body' and 'sensory body'. The physical body gives the impression that each human being is a separate entity. The sensory body is the seat of faculties of perception, sensory cravings, and expression. Though there are higher levels of spiritual development, the multitudes in Mark 6 were more focused on how other people were different than them and thus this made them superior (i.e., Gentiles vs. barbarians). Jesus ministered to them on the level where they were, specifically by feeding them and healing their bodies. Jesus also instructed them on how they were all God's children and thus equal in God's sight.

The second group Jesus mentored was the disciples. The disciples were at the same place spiritually as the multitudes. However, Jesus saw in them a 'seeking' that He instructed with parables. His hope was that when they understood the parables and the meaning behind them, this would help them to activate the most important sphere described by Amen as "equilibrium". This is the ability to maintain our composure as the world is in turmoil. Jesus knew that His true followers would have to be at this level to handle the amount of rejection they would experience.

The next group Jesus mentored was the twelve He designated as apostles. These were to be His special messengers to take His message to the world. The final group was the inner circle: Peter, John, and James. Jesus mentored them in what we traditionally think of as mentoring. Because it was with these three, he shared his most intimate secret: that he was God come to earth.

Professors as Mentors in the Tradition of Christ

Professors are called to mentor our students in the manner that Jesus mentored his followers. The reason for professors to mentor their students is that mentoring crystallizes professional development (Fox, 2001). This professional development focuses on the integration of technical skills, knowledge, and personal values (Fox, 2001). According to Fox, mentoring socializes students into professional life.

Following in the example of Jesus, professors are to mentor their students based on where students are in their development as professional social workers. To continue the metaphor stated above, professors are on a journey with students becoming professional social workers. The journey begins when the person enters the university as a student. Students want to be taught in order to get the best grade. As the person moves along the journey, they can become a 'seeker'. The seeker wants to be shown how to acquire the information and be able to apply it in a work situation. Next, if the person continues to grow and develop, they can become a scholar. The scholar wants to work with the professor to generate knowledge. The final phase is the self-directed scholar. This person wants to start to generate his or her own knowledge. Thus, it is up to the professor to assess where the person is in their journey and help them be successful with obtaining their goal(s) and at a pace the person is comfortable with.

MAPPING

The Word of God is the map that we are to follow. Jesus came to earth – the Word made flesh who dwelt among us (John 1:14). As we follow Christ, we have the vision. We then become a reflection and manifestation of that vision. We teach what we are and where we are on that personal journey. Students then follow us. Mapping becomes part of the lifelong journey. As we look back, there are more

lessons from previous experiences. Though students will learn a particular lesson, they initially learn it within the context of where they are in the journey. As they continue on the journey, those initial lessons are revisited, but now within a deeper context based on more life experience. This process is a renewing of the mind as is explicated in Romans 12: 2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. Much of the content information we teach students can become antiquated. The basic principles we teach students will transcend time. So, the knowledge is for today, but the principles are for a lifetime.

Following Christ, we have the map. In II Corinthians 17, we see that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”. That gives us a new map to follow, new direction. Living by the map is living by faith and living with Christ in us.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I know live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

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