

MINISTERIAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

ADVANCED ORIENTATION SEMINAR

Theme: “The Process of Supervised Training”

Intern’s Ethical Responsibility to the Supervising Pastor

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministerial Internship Program allows interns and spouses to be part of a pastoral team and part of a church movement which is organized and committed to all aspects of building the kingdom of God.

Whether your calling is in pastoral ministry, youth ministry, music ministry, children's ministry, or one of many other areas of specialization, it is essential that you understand the broad spectrum of local church ministries, para-church ministries and denominational ministries. The only way a minister can gain the experience and exposure to the total scope of Church of God ministry in a brief time is to work under the guidance of an experienced, trained and anointed supervisor/trainer. An intern needs a supervisor who has an interest in reproducing himself/herself in other people, and who sees the importance of mentoring and discipling laborers for the harvest.

The supervising pastor/intern relationship demands ethical responsibility. The internship experience is a strategy for internal character transformation and practical preparation for leadership. We know that the ungodliness of this world and the human heart will not be challenged by a wimpish, fainthearted, superficial version of Christianity. The world needs to see a vigorous, valiant, vehement committed disciple; not a passive, lukewarm pietist afraid to stand up for God.

MIP is not a quick-fix formula for success as a spiritual leader. It is a training process, which when energized by the Holy Spirit and guided by an anointed supervisor, will build insight and confidence into the intern. MIP equips the intern to proclaim God's Word, to live by faith, to follow divine direction and to counsel and encourage people.

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The willingness of a pastor to serve as a MIP supervisor reflects his/her understanding of the example of Jesus Christ as a discipler, a mentor and role model. Jesus Christ, the Master Discipler, really cared about people and knew that it was not enough to fulfill only His opportunities. His vision for the whole world required that as part of His ministry He must teach others how to reap the harvest. Christ knew that others could go where He could not go and reach people who His life and ministry could not reach. The man or woman of God who has captured God's own vision for ministry will give themselves to others in partnership as a discipler and spiritual leader.

Serving as a ministerial intern led by a supervising pastor is a great opportunity to learn and develop. The supervising pastor will do as Jesus did and teach character transformation. Jesus specifically taught His disciples what to be like, not just what to do. For example, when the disciples wanted to learn to pray, Jesus taught them a pattern for prayer, and taught them a character quality which is dependency. Although many today know how to pray, few know how to live dependent on God. Thus, your internship is more than learning how to perform and move a crowd; it is learning how to live dependently on God. Depending on God involves many things, such as, eliminating anxiety, materialistic cravings and status seeking.

The Biblical way of making disciples begins with establishing a good learning atmosphere among the pastoral team. This atmosphere requires mutual respect, trust and confidence. All ministers must learn and remember that being a leader means working with people, and that is not always easy. Interpersonal relationships can make or break a leader. A minister must be a "people person" who develops and uses skills in activating that most precious of all resource--people.

John C. Maxwell, in his book, Be A People Person says, "The basis of life is people and how they relate to each other. Our success, fulfillment, and happiness depend upon our ability to relate effectively. The best way to become a person that others are drawn to is to develop qualities that we are attracted to in others." It is important for the intern to demonstrate ethical responsibility in relationship to the supervising pastor.

I. THE GOLDEN RULE FOR INTERNS

The intern must remember that the key to relating to others, even to the supervising pastor is, "Therefore whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them" (Matthew 7:12).

Problems will often develop among the members of the pastoral staff. If you, the intern, are aware of a problem, it is your responsibility to make a sincere effort to facilitate a positive change. You should determine to be an initiator of change not a reactor to problems. For example, some supervising pastors start off failing to follow the guidelines of MIP. They may not have the weekly sharing sessions which are required or they may fail to complete the monthly assignment forms or some other essential requirement. The intern is not to be a reactor by just complaining; he or she should quickly initiate with the supervising pastor changes that will resolve the problem.

II. WAYS YOU WANT OTHERS TO TREAT YOU

A. You want others to encourage you.

Most of our best friends have been those who encouraged us. The members of the pastoral team must encourage each other. It has been said that, ". . . the happiest people are those who have invested their time in others. The unhappiest people are those who wonder how the world is going to make them happy."

B. You want others to appreciate you.

William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." Every intern should often express appreciation to the supervising pastor and the congregation for the opportunity to serve and grow. There are certain principles that the intern must remember.

1. We cannot underestimate the value of a person.
2. Don't take advantage of people.
3. Give people the credit they deserve.
4. Act quickly to make things right.

5. Never embarrass anyone in any situation.
6. Seek advice from others.
7. Be fair and honest in everything.
8. Do not show favoritism.

C. You want others to forgive you.

Most of our emotional problems and anxieties come from unresolved conflicts or failing to have developed right relationships with people. "A forgiving spirit is the one basic, necessary ingredient for a solid relationship," according to John Maxwell. The unfortunate truth is that many of us, instead of offering total forgiveness, pray something like this Irish prayer:

"May those who love us, love us; and those who don't love us may God turn their hearts; and if He doesn't turn their hearts, may He turn their ankles, so we'll know them by their limping."

John Maxwell said, "People who find it difficult to forgive don't see themselves realistically. They are either terribly arrogant or tremendously insecure." Forgiveness should be given as quickly and as totally as possible.

If you, an intern, are to live victoriously, you must quit keeping score of the injustices that have happened. You must learn that in the ministry there will be many times when you will experience hurts and strained relationships. People will curse you, tell you where to go, how to get there, and offer their assistance. The man or woman of God must not hold any grudges or carry any resentments against others. You must not let others control your emotions or what happens inside your mind.

D. You want others to listen to you.

The ability to listen to people and show an accurate level of empathy is a necessary skill in any helping ministry or profession. As people advance in positions of authority, they often develop a lack of patience in listening to those under them. A deaf

ear is the first indication of a closed mind. The larger a church and staff gets the less the senior pastor may listen to people. Yet that is when he/she needs to listen to those on the firing line the most. If leaders do not form the habit of listening carefully and intelligently, then they will not get all the facts they need and people will resent their decisions.

E. You want others to understand you.

Communication is fundamental to understanding. If you the intern want the supervising pastor to understand you, then you must be open and willing to communicate often and in an appropriate way. Of course, the supervising pastor must show an interest in you and be a good listener, not just a good talker.

Remembering and practicing these principles will help you to develop the qualities that we all admire in others. Important words which might be used with these five principles are:

1. You can do it/you did a good job - encouragement.
2. Thank you - appreciation.
3. I forgive you - forgiveness.
4. What do you think? or What is your opinion? - listening.
5. I want to know you better - understanding.

The intern and the supervising pastor are a team. They should work close together to solve problems, care for people, reach the lost and build the body of Christ.

III. A PICTURE OF A WINNING TEAM

In the book, Developing the Leader Within You, John Maxwell describes many characteristics needed in pastoral staff members in order to build a winning pastoral team. Maxwell points out that winning teams have great leaders who know how to motivate others and create an environment for success. Excellent leaders show interest and care in their team members by their words and actions.

When H. Ross Perot was putting together a team for a new company his motto was "Eagles don't flock. You have to find them one at a time." He was saying that you can't build a strong team on weak individuals.

Adlai E. Stevenson said that there are only three rules of sound administrators: pick good people; tell them not to cut corners; and back them to the limits. Picking good people is the most important. In Maxwell's book, he lists the "top 20" personal requirements he looks for in a potential staff member. They are as follows:

- (1) Positive Attitude - the ability to see people and situations in a positive way.
- (2) *High Energy Level - strength and stamina to work hard and not wear down.
- (3) Personal Warmth - a manner that draws people to them.
- (4) Integrity - trustworthy, good solid character, words and walk are consistent.
- (5) Responsible - always "comes through," no excuses; job delegated-job done.
- (6) Good Self-image - feels good about self, other, and life.
- (7) *Mental Horsepower - ability to keep learning as the job expands.
- (8) Leadership Ability - has high influence over others.
- (9) Followership Ability - willingness to submit, play team ball, and follow the leader.
- (10) *Absence of Personal Problems - personal, family, and business life are in order.
- (11) People Skills - the ability to draw people and develop them.
- (12) Sense of Humor - enjoys life, fails to take self too seriously.
- (13) *Resilience - able to "bounce back" when problems arise.

- (14) *Track Record - has experience and success, hopefully in two or more situations.
- (15) Great Desire - hungers for growth and personal development.
- (16) Self-discipline - willing to "pay the price" and handle success.
- (17) Creative - ability to see solutions and fix problems.
- (18) Flexibility - not afraid of change; fluid; flows as the organization grows.
- (19) Sees "Big Picture" - able to look beyond personal interest and see the total picture.
- (20) *Intuitive - able to discern and sense a situation without tangible data.

*These things probably cannot be taught. The others can be taught with a proper mentor, environment, and willingness by the staff member. Most of the qualities in the above list can be evaluated with a couple of interviews and tests.

The Ministerial Internship Program is designed to help improve your strengths in many of these areas and equip you as an effective team member. Remember that the growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership.

IV. CHARACTER TRAITS TO BE MODELED BY INTERNS

A. TEACHABILITY

When Jesus told Simon Peter in Luke 5:4 to "put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch," Peter felt humiliated, embarrassed and angered at what he thought was an unreasonable demand. Yet he responded "... nevertheless at thy Word I will let down the net." The essential quality that Jesus recognized in Peter was teachability, the willingness to embrace new truths. Peter's aptitude as a student would be tested time and time again.

Kingdom strategy number one: teachability. Teachability is the most basic quality of any disciple and the word disciple literally means "learner." Teachable

people are not hostile toward change. Most people are open to new facts and ideas that primarily support what they already believe. Real disciples are willing to not only expand their bank of understanding but to even allow God to restructure their motivations and lifestyles in order to bring about significant positive changes.

Disciples must be teachable or else God will find someone else to use. It is sad but true that all Christians are not real disciples. John MacArthur says that a Christian leader must be "Proven, Available, Teachable, and have a Heart for God."

Why are some people unteachable?

1. Because of prejudice.

They reject new ideas and insights. The act of blocking out information not already in their realm of belief also blocks out the potential for growth. Prejudice is more complex than bigotry, it rejects all new concepts without even considering their plausibility. If Peter had been like many preachers, he would have told Jesus, "Sorry, no carpenter is going to tell me about fishing."

2. Because of preferences.

The second reason for a low teachability quotient is described by Jesus as rocky soil. Unteachable people are controlled by their own preferences. The rocks of pride and ambition are more important to them than fruitfulness. They have little room in their hearts for the ways of God, which often run contrary to our human inclinations. We all need to discover which rocks are keeping us spiritually shallow and/or hindering our growth. These rocks are our preferences: the people, possessions, or practices that compete with the ways of God for our attention. They may be all right in themselves, but affection for them may be out of proportion with their importance. They then become idols and get preference over

putting our roots deep in spiritual soil.

3. Because of preoccupations.

The third reason people are often unteachable is also seen in Luke in Jesus' parable of the thorn-infested terrain. Our preoccupations with materialism and carnal desires are our thorns. Jesus said the thorns are, "the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches." They represent our preoccupations with material security, status and lusts. Preoccupation with anxiety and fear blocks our teachability. We become consumed with making money, material possessions and pleasures.

When the thorns of fear and insecurity choke us, we must remove those thorns by building our faith which comes from God's Word. The light of God's Word will make our clean soil flourish and be fruitful.

The first kingdom strategy is to obey God regardless! There is no discipleship without being teachable.

B. FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility involves learning to welcome newness. Discipleship requires us to be flexible people who allow the fermentation of the Kingdom of God to shape us, as wineskins, rather than us trying to impose our willful rigidity on the Kingdom.

Kingdom strategy number two: welcoming newness means that citizenship in the Kingdom of God must be seen as an entirely new and unique life calling, not as something to be added to the old life.

Inflexibility is a symptom of spiritual unhealthiness. Luke 5:31 says, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." According to Jesus, all humans are spiritually unhealthy and need a doctor. The only ones who recover are those who confess their illness.

People generally take one of the first three following approaches to their spiritual illness, which do not work; however, there is a fourth approach which does work.

1. **DENY** - First, you may deny your own disease of spiritual unhealthiness. Secular humanism denies sin and leaves us with no basis for morality or ethics. This option will not work.
2. **IGNORE** - A second response to your spiritual illness is to admit its existence, but ignore the need to treat it. For these people, it is too painful or humiliating to deal with their sin. Their major symptom is called pride. This option will not work.
3. **EXCUSE** - Thirdly, you may try to excuse your disease by saying, "It's not so bad." Thus, we compare ourself to others who are worse than we are and thus take comfort in not being too badly infected. This is unsound because God's standard is perfection, absolute holiness, and spiritual wholeness, with no trace of disease. All sin is to be eradicated and condemned. This option will not work.
4. **OBEY** - We must be flexible because God demands that we change, learn, grow, become new and nothing like the old nature. This option will always work.

Supervision of the intern's life and thinking gives opportunity for a spiritual transplant and constant treatment with a fresh application of the blood of Jesus, purifying us and forgiving us as we confess and trust in Him.

Flexibility, change and growth must be a part of our lives! It has been said that, "Rigid, super-religious people take to change like fish take to mountain climbing." Do you know anyone like that? Do you see someone like that in the mirror every morning? Most of us are somewhat inflexible, and the sad truth is, the older we get the more rigid we become. Our will becomes less bendable like our muscles. Paul found the secret; he was

pioneering into newness right up to his death.

Kingdom strategy number two involves daily renewal. Daily renewal keeps us flexible, more willing to make positive changes in our mind-set and behavior.

C. HUMILITY

Underlying all the Beatitudes is the Kingdom quality of humility. David Schroeder said, "If we crave even-greater financial and social status, letting materialistic success symbols become obsessions to us, we will be of little value to the work of God's Kingdom and poor representatives of what the Kingdom is all about. While poverty, hunger, weeping and rejection may not be part of our life goals, neither should obtaining wealth, feasting lavishly, living as though life is always a party and seeking popularity."

A big part of humility is contentment. Contentment is the ability to rejoice even in adversity. Kingdom strategy number three: rejoicing in adversity means that disciples of Jesus willingly accept and live by Biblical principles, values and morals. This Biblical view of humility is contrary to the attitude of the world.

Ours is a day of self-promotion, defending our own rights, taking care of ourselves first, winning by intimidation, pushing for first place, and a dozen other self serving agendas. Selfishness will destroy our joy and contentment. People who live with a selfish attitude set themselves up for a grim existence.

The ministerial intern should always bear the character imprint of God in every aspect of thinking, attitude and behavior. Every day Jesus modeled before His disciples God's standards of purity and maturity. The intern should see qualities of Christian character such as teachability, flexibility and humility modeled by the supervising pastor.

D. COMPASSION

This character trait deals with how we treat people, especially in responding

to rejection. Kingdom strategy number four: responding to rejection. "In Kingdom living, disciples of Jesus Christ respond to hostility and rejection by treating their enemies as well as they want to be treated themselves." Dr. Lamar Vest made the statement that "the mark of a true spiritual leader is how he/she treats his/her enemies." Jesus blesses obedience, not excuses, in our responsibility to treat people with compassion. Becoming godly in character and behavior must be our highest priority and lifelong calling. The words of Jesus and New Testament Scriptures support the idea that Christians are likely to have enemies. Jesus said, "Love your enemies . . ." (Luke 6:27). James 4:14 says, ". . . friendship with the world is hatred toward God." Jesus said, "Pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:28b). Paul said that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Supervising pastors must help interns in their goal of Christ-likeness by teaching them how to respond to mistreatment.

E. INTEGRITY

Ministerial interns need to develop and be exposed to the highest levels of integrity and fair-mindedness. Mature disciples of Christ will frequently engage in healthy self-evaluation and self-examination to assess their own spiritual status.

Integrity relates to how we treat people who disagree with us. Many people, even Christians, have a tendency to write off anyone who does not think as they think, and then justify this by looking for a spiritual inadequacy in that person. Ministers must not manifest a critical or unforgiving spirit. We must not turn a person with an opposing view into an adversary. Thus, we must temper our judgmentalism and realize how hypocritical it is to find fault with others while remaining blind to our own shortcomings.

Integrity relates to how we treat our sin. There are many ways we sugar-coat our sins. Christians play not only mind-games, but also spirit-games. For example,

Christians gossip under the guise of sharing a prayer request. The quality of integrity is essential in all spheres of our lives, and in all our relationships.

Integrity relates to how we judge others. Ministers, of all people, must remember that judging others is sin (Luke 6:37). Few commands of Jesus are stated so simply and so clearly. The positive role we play in a person's life by not being judgmental is a very powerful motivator. Instead of looking for the bad in a person, we choose to expect the best. Our attitudes toward others and our treatment of others have power to transform. We bring out the best in people by encouraging them and praising them for every positive improvement.

Integrity relates to how we work with others. Here are some suggestions for interns and supervising pastors in their working relationships and in their ministry.

- A. Look for the best in others.
- B. Be persuaded that everyone can do better.
- C. Demonstrate confidence in your leaders, staff and congregation.
- D. Maintain dialogue, open communication and feedback.
- E. Set high, yet achievable standards.
- F. Outlaw "put-downs" even if meant in jest.
- G. Control and correct prejudices which warp our perception of potential: culture, appearance, male/female, age, etc.

The principles of integrity demand of Christians that we work at building up one another rather than tearing them down by judgmentalism. Kingdom strategy number five: self-examination. Instead of focusing on the failures and inadequacies of others, we should engage in meaningful self-examination and spiritual assessment. We must refrain from destructive criticism through the modeling of character, integrity, and self-examination.

CONCLUSION

If the intern does not possess teachability, flexibility, and humility, no amount of modeling will make him/her a leader. If a supervising pastor is not selfless, courageous, caring, and highly competent in ministerial skills, no amount of motivating will make him/her an effective trainer.

The supervising pastor and intern must see themselves as part of a team with specific roles to be carried out with mutual respect and commitment, bringing about a life-changing experience for both of them.

There is no discipleship without Strategy #1: teachability. But this teachability is more than a person's willingness to enroll in a self-improvement course. Rather, it is a constant readiness to learn in every situation of life. Real teachability involves a willingness to obey God even if our logic would call something absurd.

Strategy #2 in modeling discipleship requires us to be flexible people who allow God's will to shape us rather than us trying to impose our will on God.

Strategy #3 calls for us to model the ability to rejoice in adversity and to humbly follow a standard of life which may often be contrary to human inclinations.

Strategy #4 challenges our courage and inner strength as Christ calls us to respond to hostility and rejection by treating our enemies as well as we want to be treated.

Strategy #5 is a Christ-like virtue which calls for self-examination, evaluation and assessment. We are to refrain from destructive criticism, which focuses on the failures of others, and carefully look deep within ourselves and demonstrate ethical responsibility to those who would train us for effective ministry.