The RTS Orlando Mentoring Experience

MENTORING HANDBOOK

2014-2015
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Dear RTS Orlando Students and Mentors,

At RTS Orlando, it is our desire to train mature Christian leaders who are grounded in the gospel, who know how to apply truth to life, who are effective leaders, and who are trained in the basic skills of ministry and leadership. We also hope to help students develop a Christ-like character, a Christian worldview, and a love for the Reformed faith.

We think of the spiritual formation here at seminary as a three legged stool. The seat is the basic, formative classroom instruction. Supporting the seat are three essential legs of the stool: RTS community life (chapel, forums, and student life activities), field education (on the job training), and The RTS Orlando Mentoring Experience (hereafter The Mentoring Experience).

We are glad that you are a part of The Mentoring Experience. Whether you are a student or a mentor, we hope that as you work together, you will grow closer to the Lord, and in greater Christ-likeness.

As a student, The Mentoring Experience is not only a requirement for your graduation, but it will also help you focus on areas of your life that need strengthening. We hope that this practical, personal interaction will provide encouragement, accountability and perhaps lead to life-long friendships.

As a mentor, you will be involved in the spiritual formation of the next generation of Christian leaders. You will have the privilege of walking alongside a student, challenging them in areas of weakness, identifying and affirming their strengths, and calling forth greater godliness. Mentoring is really a means of making disciples formed in the image of Christ.

We are excited that you are part of this process. We pray that the Lord will bless you all in the RTS mentoring experience.

Warmly,

Leigh Swanson, M.A.
Mentoring Coordinator
Mentoring Overview

Steps for the Student

1. Find a church home. The local church is essential to spiritual formation and ministry preparation. It also provides the most natural place to meet and connect with potential mentors.
2. Familiarize yourself with this manual and the forms involved.
3. Prayerfully invite someone you have identified as a potential mentor into a mentoring relationship. Provide them a hard copy or a link to the mentoring handbook.
4. Complete the Personal Development Contract (PDC) and turn it in, either in hard copy or by e-mail to the Mentoring Coordinator (MC) for approval.
5. Begin meeting with your mentor at least twice per month for the duration of the 12-week contract, while completing the terms of the contract.
6. Upon completion of the contract, turn in your signed PDC document signed by your mentor as completed with a 1-page, double-spaced reflection on the process. This should include what you learned, if you felt it was helpful, and how you saw God work. Both documents should be turned in via email (lswanson@rts.edu) or hard copy.
7. Upon completion of your third PDC, sign up for 2PT536 in order to earn one academic credit for The Mentoring Experience.

Steps for the Mentor

1. Thank you for your willingness to serve as a mentor to an RTS student. Without your help, this program would not work. We hope that through The Mentoring Experience you can play a major part in a student’s spiritual growth while at RTS.
2. Familiarize yourself with this manual and the forms involved.
3. Expect to hear from the student. They are responsible for setting up meetings and moving the process along. If you do not hear from your student, please contact the Mentoring Coordinator (MC) via email or phone (407-278-5288).
4. Provide assistance and suggestions for the student in the initial formulation of their Personal Development Contract (PDC).
5. During the meetings, we encourage you to get to know the student. This includes asking tough, probing questions, offering encouragement, and helping them to grow in their contract focus. It is our hope you will help spur them on to godliness and maturity with the Holy Spirit.
6. Upon completion of the 12-week contract, please sign and date the PDC document and give it to the student. Your signature is required to complete the contract. Sign if you feel the student has completed the contract’s requirements.
7. If you have any questions or concerns about your student, please contact the MC.
Mentoring Experience Guidelines

Why does RTS Orlando require mentoring for students?
The Mentoring Experience exists because we care about your spiritual formation. Through this program, you will be able to focus on various character traits and ministry skills that will prepare you personally for ministry.

We desire that, through mentoring, the student will:

1. Live for the glory of God and the blessing of others.
2. See the importance of Christian character and holiness.
3. Experience learning that is relational and communal, but also individualized to personal needs.
4. Grow in his or her sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit.

How long is the program?
The Mentoring Experience consists of four, 12-week long Personal Development Contracts. These contracts are completed during any four semesters while you are an RTS Orlando student – spring, summer, or fall. The program officially starts the spring of your first year. You can start a contract at any point in the semester. There are 2 checkpoints during the program that will help you stay on track:

1. After completing 30 credits you should be beginning your first PDC.
2. Your third PDC should be completed before you start your final semester. Once your third PDC is completed, you should register for 2PT536.

You may finish all four PDCs before your third year if you are on the 3-year MDiv track.

How is the program administrated?
The Mentoring Coordinator (hereafter MC), Leigh Swanson, will be the primary administrator of the program. Please direct any questions to her. The main administrative points are:

1. Procure a mentor. This is the student’s responsibility, but help can be provided by the MC if required.
2. Each contract will be submitted to the MC for approval. Once approved, the student may begin.
3. At the end of each contract, the mentor will sign the PDC document to indicate that the contract has been successfully completed. The student will then return the signed PDC document to the MC along with a 1-page reflection.
4. After completion of the third PDC the student will register for 2PT536.

Who is required to participate in the Mentoring Experience?
Any MDiv student who began summer of 2013 or later, must complete the Mentoring Experience as a degree requirement for graduation.
Personal Development Contract (PDC)

What is a PDC?

1. The PDC is a written document which helps you and your mentor focus your mentoring times on specific topics for growth. A blank PDC is located on page 10 of this handbook.

2. Each PDC will focus either on an area of personal growth or an area of skill development. Two of our four PDCs must address areas of personal growth. We ask that your first contract be related to your personal devotional life.

3. Each PDC has three elements to it: a knowledge element, a practical element, and a relational element. The knowledge element will focus on growing your understanding of an issue. The practical element will focus on developing your maturity in that area. The relational element will focus on growing alongside others.

4. A PDC is entirely confidential. Only you, your mentor, and the MC will see the PDC. It is not a part of the student’s file and upon completion of 2PT536, all the student’s PDCs will be disposed of. We therefore encourage students to look at difficult areas of personal growth in a supportive environment.

How do I create a PDC?

1. The PDC Form is located in the Resources portion at the end of this manual.

2. Through prayerful consideration and discussion with your mentor, you will identify an area of growth that you would like to focus on for the duration of the contract.

3. For each assignment portion of the contract, you, as a student, are to come up with reasonable requirements that you think will be helpful in your growth. The total time for all requirements should be 6-8 hours over the course of the contract. You are encouraged to seek input from your mentor, professors, the MC to come up with meaningful requirements (it is not our desire for this to be ‘busy work’).

4. Once you have filled out the PDC, either email a scanned copy or bring a hard copy to the MC for approval. The MC may offer minor adjustments if the contract seems too light or heavy on work, and will sign it to verify approval.

5. At the end of each contract, you will write a 1-page reflection paper on the experience. You will then go over the PDC with your mentor and, if it is complete, the mentor will sign it.

6. Return the signed PDC document and 1-page reflection to the MC for completion (via email or hard copy). Both documents are filed by the MC for the duration of each student’s mentoring experience and then disposed of upon completion of the program.

Questions?

Contact Leigh Swanson at 407-278-5288 or lswanson@rts.edu
Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who can I ask to be a mentor?
A. Any mature Christian can be a mentor. It could be your pastor, a local ministry leader, a lay-person in your congregation, counselor, Christian leader, RTS faculty member or staff, etc. It may not be another student.

Q. Can I keep the same mentor from PDC to PDC?
A. Yes, you can have the same mentor throughout the whole program or a different mentor for each PDC. We want you to have the freedom to seek out mentors that will be the greatest help to you over the course of the program, or to stay with someone who works well with you.

Q. How often and how long must I meet with my mentor?
A. It is expected that each student meet with their mentor once every other week throughout the duration of the PDC. That means you will have 6 meetings over the course of the 12 weeks. These meetings should be about 1 hour long, but can be longer if desired.

Q. Does mentoring have to occur one-to-one?
A. No, groups are fine. This way if someone (e.g. your pastor or lay leader) is being asked to mentor by multiple students they can meet with multiple students at one time. Groups can often have a greater sharpening effect on people.

Q. Can I use my Field Education supervisor as a Mentor?
A. Yes. Regular meetings with a field education supervisor can count as meetings for the Mentoring Experience provided that you have filled out and turned in a PDC to the MC.

Q. Can I keep the same focus for multiple PDCs?
A. Yes, if you and your mentor feel that there is more work to be done on a particular PDC topic, feel free to spend more time on it. Goals of the program are your sanctification and skill development; therefore you may need to go deeper in some areas and spend less time on others. You will need to fill out another contract even if your focus remains the same.

Q. Where do I go if I need help with my PDC?
A. The MC is always willing to help students think through different areas that might become PDC foci and formulate appropriate requirements to aid growth in those areas. You are also encouraged to ask your mentor and professors for help in identifying potential focus topics.
Student and Mentor
Resources and Forms
Possible PDC Foci

Suggestions for Personal Growth

- Addictive Behaviors
- Anger
- Bitterness/Resentment
- Compassion
- Control
- Devotional Life*
- Depression
- Fasting
- Finances
- Forgiveness
- Gossip
- Gratitude
- Guidance
- Healthy Relationships
- Humility
- Insecurity
- Inappropriate Relationships
- Marriage
- Memorization
- Meditation
- Parenting
- People-Pleasing
- Prayer
- Sabbath
- Sacrifice
- Self-Care
- Sexuality
- Sexual Temptation and Sin
- Simplicity
- Singleness
- Stewardship of Time and Gifts

Suggestions for Skill Development

- Administration
- Administering the Sacraments
- Church Planting
- Connecting with Other Churches
- Dealing with Conflict
- Developing a Philosophy of Ministry
- Discipleship
- Evangelism
- Fund Development
- Goal-setting for Churches
- Human Resources
- Leading a Meeting
- Leadership Skills
- Leading Small-Groups
- Pastoral Counseling
- Peacemaking
- Personnel Issues
- Preaching from Narratives
- Preaching from Poetry
- Preaching from Prophecy
- Pre-Marital Counseling
- Running a Session/Elder-Board
- Teaching Adults
- Teaching Children
- Vision-Casting
- Visitation
- Worship-Leading

*We ask that your first PDC cover this.
Suggested Discussion Questions for Mentors

1. Have you been able to apply what you are learning in class to your spiritual formation? If so, what has been encouraging to you? If not, what do you think causes this disconnect?
2. In what ways do you tend to connect with God? (i.e., prayer, Scripture-reading, worship, etc)?
3. In what ways do you find that God communicates most clearly to you? What has he been showing you lately?
4. Do you do anything to refresh yourself in the midst of your schooling? How has it helped?
5. Are there any things in your life that you feel are dragging you down? How do you handle them?
6. What does a Sabbath-rest look like to you? Are you able to have one?
7. Do you feel as though you have a growing love for God’s people?
8. What are some of the problems or sins you feel like you can’t get past right now?
9. Do you have other people to encourage you? Are you able to spend time with them?
10. How do you feel you are growing in or demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit?
11. What do you do when you feel like your sin over-burdens you?
12. Does it seem like you experience the power of the gospel on a daily basis?
13. Do you find that you connect or disconnect with your feelings? How do you connect on an emotional level with others?
14. Are there any issues affecting your marriage? How are you working through those?
15. Do you feel like you have time alone with your spouse among all your other responsibilities?

What Might a Mentoring Meeting Look Like?

It is our hope that this program will allow students to benefit from more mature Christians playing a role in their lives. As a mentor, you are one of those mature Christians. We do not expect you to spend a full hour simply talking about the focus on the student’s PDC (but you are welcome to).

A normal meeting might include 5-10 minutes in prayer for each other, 20-30 minutes discussing what is going on in the student’s life and 20-30 minutes discussing the focus of the PDC. However, you may use the meeting in whatever way you see fit. We want these to be times that are as natural and organic as possible. To help with this, the questions above are offered as examples of ways to spark deeper conversation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Mentoring Coordinator.
Personal Development Contract

Student Name: ______________________________  Student E-mail: ______________________________

Mentor Name: ______________________________  Mentor E-Mail: ______________________________

Mentor’s Church/Ministry or Business Background:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Mentoring Cycle Focus: __________________________

Rationale:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Understanding (This objective should help you grow in understanding about your topic):
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Maturity (This objective should help you become more adept at how you engage your particular focus):
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Accountability (This objective should help you include others into your growth process):
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Start Date: ______________________________  End Date: ______________________________

Mentor’s Signature: ___________________________________________________________________

(Upon completion of the contract)
PDC Example for Skill Development

Student Name: John Smith
Student E-mail: johnsmith@me.com

Mentor Name: Pastor Tom Johnson
Mentor E-mail: pastortom@church.com

Mentor’s Church/Ministry or Business Background:
Tom is the Senior Pastor and Head of Staff at Grace Point Church in Orlando. He received his Master of Divinity from Covenant Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He also served as Associate Pastor of Youth Discipleship and Ministry in Dallas.

Mentoring Cycle Focus: To gain more skill in preaching on narratives.
Rationale: I have had few opportunities to preach and would love greater experience and feedback on my preaching style and exposition, especially on narratives. This will help me develop a required skill for future pastors.

Understanding (This objective should help you grow in understanding about your topic):
In order to gain greater understanding on narrative preaching, I will read chapters 10 and 16 of Graeme Goldsworthy’s Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture. I will also listen to 2-3 sermons by Tim Keller and John Piper on Narratives to hear example of exemplary preaching.

Maturity (This objective should help you become more adept at how you practically ‘live-out’ your particular focus):
I will be preaching at my church this April and May. I will be preaching on narratives during both sermons. My pastor (who is mentoring me this cycle) has offered to give significant feedback on my exposition as well as giving my outlines significant help.

Accountability (This objective should help you include others into your growth process):
After both sermons, I plan on having my life group offer their feedback as well. It is made up of men and women of various ages and their comments should be very helpful as I look to preach in the future.

Start Date: ________________________________  End Date: ________________________________

Mentor’s Signature: ___________________________________________________________________

(Upon completion of the contract)
PDC Example for Personal Development

Student Name: John Smith

Student E-mail: johnsmith@me.com

Mentor Name: Pastor Tom Johnson

Mentor E-mail: pastortom@church.com

Mentor’s Church/Ministry or Business Background:
Tom is the Senior Pastor and Head of Staff at Grace Point Church in Orlando. He received his Master of Divinity from Covenant Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He also served as Associate Pastor of Youth Discipleship and Ministry in Dallas.

Mentoring Cycle Focus: To curb feelings of lust.

Rationale: I have found that my mind spends a lot of time thinking about women in sexual ways that are sinful. In the past I have struggled with pornography and I fear I may again. I hope to find ways to counteract this tendency.

Understanding (This objective should help you grow in understanding about your topic):
I plan to read Lisa McMinn’s *Sexuality and Holy Longing* to help me understand how my culture has affected my heart and get a better sense of how Scripture talks about sexuality.

Maturity (This objective should help you become more adept at how you practically ‘live-out’ your particular focus): I am going to have my mentor offer accountability. I will be seeing our pastor for pastoral counseling as I look to understand my struggle.

Accountability (This objective should help you include others into your growth process):
I will be joining a group for men who struggle with sexual addiction this semester. While I do not think I am a sex addict, I think this will greatly help me. I take this issue very seriously.

Start Date: ____________________________ End Date: ____________________________

Mentor’s Signature: ____________________________________________________________

(Upon completion of the contract)