

PREPARATION FOR THE ROLE OF TUTOR

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Preparation for the role of tutor is a rather new concept. Hence it calls for definition. It can be understood as implying arrangements for offering special preparation. Then the topic would suggest treating the how, when, and where of such arrangements. But the topic can also be understood as referring to the substance of such preparation. This would call for the treatment of *what really prepares and makes a person proficient for the role of tutor*. In the letter in which Executive Secretary Robert Voss asked me to present this topic, briefly listing some points that might be treated, he mentioned maturity as one of them. Maturity would belong to the substance of what prepares a person for a tutor role.

I shall treat the assigned topic predominantly from the latter approach, though the how, when, and where of gaining that substance will be touched upon, certainly in the panel and floor discussions. I shall also concentrate on what has prepared graduates for the role of tutor. This seminar was originally conceived to encourage a return to the use of graduate tutors and to make the best possible use of them. It is my understanding that only seminary students or seminary vicars come into consideration as undergraduate tutors.

1. Preparation for Maturity

A measure of maturity is implied by the very status of being a graduate of a basic course of training either for the pastoral ministry or the Christian teaching ministry. It means that as graduates they have received a rounded-out basic training to equip them for their respective ministries. This includes rounded-out courses in Christian doctrine as well as on the content of the Holy Scriptures. They are given, of course, on different levels. The seminary graduate will have been declared proficient in preaching and teaching. He will have had a comprehensive course in pastoral care, counseling, and administration. The graduate teacher will have had a comparable training in teaching methodology and school administration. Both will have been declared ready to work independently in the ministry for which they have been trained.

Proper self confidence is a vital ingredient of maturity. The consciousness that you are still lacking a complete, rounded-out training for a given assignment is prone to impede self assurance. When you have been made familiar with all the basic facts, truths, and principles involved, you will fully realize that teaching, shepherding, guiding, counseling will always remain the practice of an art. You will know that these tasks can never be handled like a science, to be carried out mechanically by following a specific set of rules and regulations. This truth is prone to escape the undergraduate. Until a tutor has had a rounded-out basic training his self confidence is prone to be impaired by the feeling that he can't do his best because of the many things that he has not yet covered in his training.

One of the thoughts underlying the original concept of the tutor was this that he was to be given an opportunity to engage in the guidance and instruction of young people in close association and consultation with a faculty of tried and experienced Christian educators. Again, only a graduate is likely to feel fully at ease in such a role.

Of course, the maturity credited to someone merely because of his status as a graduate of a training course will be relative. We have had many good undergraduate tutors who probably showed greater maturity, ability, and knowledge of their subject matter than could have been expected from many graduates. We would still have to say, however, that these same undergraduate tutors would undoubtedly have done an even better job and shown even greater maturity if they had been graduates.

From the very beginning when the tutor position was established for our worker training schools in 1915 it was thought of as a prestige position. Men with good academic gifts, with a manifest aptitude for teaching,

and with a personality evidently suitable for the guidance and the counseling of youth were to be given an opportunity to be active in these tasks for a year or two before they entered upon their first permanent assignment. At our seminary, graduates now have had the opportunity to serve a year as vicars where they can prove themselves on these counts in addition to what has come to the attention of the faculty through the classroom and through other seminary contacts. Something similar is true of the teacher graduate who has had an opportunity to show what he can do and accomplish at his practice teaching assignment in addition to what has become evident about him at the school itself. In both cases, therefore, a fairly good basis is provided for the selection of graduate tutors as far as general maturity is concerned.

2. Preparation for Dormitory Supervision

Participation in dormitory supervision is very likely the first thing that comes to our mind when we hear that someone has been called to serve as a tutor. While dormitory supervision certainly does not exhaust his assignment, it is certainly an integral and indispensable part of it. At this task he must exercise authority over students and hold them to abide by the rules and regulations necessary for wholesome and harmonious dormitory life. God's will that youth honor and obey their superiors is in effect. At the same time it must be borne in mind that we are not living in an authoritative age but one that is generally lacking in respect and understanding for authority. This calls for special attention to the scriptural precept, Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." It is specifically addressed to fathers but applicable to all in authority. The admonition not to exasperate those placed under our authority is part and parcel of the New Testament presentation of the fourth commandment.

As a part of his preparation for his supervisory role the tutor should become thoroughly acquainted with the rules and regulations that have been deemed necessary for dormitory life, particularly also in the light of the educational objectives of the school of which the dormitory life is a part. In consultation with his dean he should become convinced that these rules and regulations are vital and necessary. This would apply also to any new regulations that he might propose or that he might be asked to carry out. For the very first principle in maintaining discipline is this that you must know just what you grant and that you really want it.

Binding rules and regulations ought therefore to be kept down to a minimum. This will make it easier to apply also the other two principles that are basic for good discipline. The second principle is this that you make very clear and explicit to those under your authority just what it is that you want and that you want it.

Not living in an authoritative age, the present tutor needs to show a measure of readiness to explain the binding rules and regulations and to supply argumentation in their behalf. He need not fear that this will involve him in an endless necessity of explaining and vindicating his procedure. Once he has won the confidence, even of present day students, by conceding in a moderate way to the current opinion that a student has a right to an explanation, his burden of supplying argumentation and justification for what he requires and demands will rapidly diminish. A determined refusal to make any allowance for this trend may easily be resented as an excessively authoritative spirit and evoke unnecessary opposition. It may exasperate.

It remains true, particularly on the high school level, that boys above all expect fairness and justice in those exercising authority over them. When these traits have been established to their satisfaction in their tutors, boys will go a long way in cooperating with him. Girls, on the other hand, generally look also for kindness and sympathetic treatment from those placed over them. Both boys and girls quite properly expect that their supervisors are really concerned about them as individuals and that they have their real interest at heart. When what they look for in this direction seems to be lacking, in their opinion, application of the final principle will be more difficult. The final principle of good discipline is simply this that you hold students to your carefully considered and clearly enunciated rules and regulations. The difficulty will be lessened for a tutor who has made real efforts in commanding respect rather than in demanding it.

It is undoubtedly true that student-tutor relationships and a tutor's expressions of interest in the affairs of the student will be freer and closer than in times past. Yet both must still be kept in such bounds that the distinctive stations of the tutor and of the student are never erased. The students themselves expect this.

Whenever a tutor has attempted to become too buddy-buddy with those placed under him, respect for him invariably broke down, and discipline with it.

What has been said about preparation for dormitory supervision applies in equal measure to undergraduate tutors as it does to graduate tutors. The undergraduate tutor may, however, be less conscious of the basic principles for good discipline which have here been enunciated. A graduate should have become very much aware of them.

3. Preparation for Shepherding

The youth of our age show very little restraint in their conduct and are not expected to show much restraint. Alcoholism, the use of drugs, disrespect for authority, vandalism, careless use of property, both of their own and that of others, shoplifting, pornography, sexual laxity and perversion are rampant among the youth of our land and present serious problems in its schools. When young people are caught at any of these things, the law generally treats them very leniently.

It is inevitable, therefore, that also the students who enter our worker training schools are to a measure affected by these current trends among youth. Problems therefore arise which did not trouble our synodical schools in the same measure in the past. When some of these matters did present problems, the tutors in the past could wait in dealing properly with them until they had become an open issue. The work of the dean as well as that of the tutors at present calls for action before the problems arise as a serious issue. It calls for a great deal of shepherding. To prepare himself for this work the tutor needs to consult with his dean in order to become well aware of the kind of vexing current problems that could be expected to arise in dormitory life. He will want to do this so that he can take positive steps to counteract them before they ever become a serious problem. He needs to work at building up proper Christian ideals of conduct to counteract these modern evil trends before individual students have become thoroughly ensnared in them and discipline becomes necessary.

The ground work for this is undoubtedly best laid by a dean's religion course on current problems. By means of the third use of the law our students should be given to see very clearly what their heavenly Father's will is in all these matters. More the law cannot do. It cannot effect anything positive. Tutors have all learned this in dogmatics. In practice we are all too prone to forget it.

The heart of the work of shepherding must be done with the Gospel message. After our heavenly Father's holy will in those vexing problems has been clearly delineated, our students need to be shown that also behind His holy will is His kindness toward us, His concern for our welfare now and hereafter. It needs to be emphasized that this divine kindness and solicitude is a part of the love of God, who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all. God earnestly desired that through faith in Him we might be His pardoned children and in such faith become blessed, rich, and fruitful even in this life. Graduate tutors are certainly prepared by their training to take part in building up Christian ideals of conduct with reference to various current problems by means of the proper use of law and Gospel. They have been prepared to carry out shepherding on an individual basis by re-stressing some of these points as the need and opportunity for doing so arises and as the need of individuals for a reminder becomes evident.

When with such shepherding a good segment of the student body is won for the Christian ideal of life before the evil trends of the day have succeeded to entrench themselves in dormitory life, very much will have been gained. Students themselves will be speaking up concerning these matters, admonishing and correcting one another in a very simple manner. Mere displeasure and disapproval on the part of fellow students who have learned to appreciate the value and beauty of Christian conduct can be very effective. If such students happen to be recognized as leaders, their attitude will do much in setting the tone of conduct in a student body and in a dormitory.

4. Preparation for Counseling

Even as the feature of shepherding should have a prominent place in the present day concept of a dean and tutor, so this should be true also of counseling. Students in our day are used to the idea of a guidance counselor. Even high school students in our day appear to have many more problems than students of the past. At the same time they seem quite ready to speak about their problems with a counselor whom they trust and in whom they have confidence. Undoubtedly this is due to the state of our society, which in its thinking and in its conduct is in so many ways clearly at variance with Christian thought and life. A considerable segment of our worker training enrollment comes from broken homes, homes in which father and mother are not of a common faith homes in which the messages of radio and television often exert a much greater influence than the conversation of a Christian family. Is it any wonder, then, that young people have problems in resolving the conflict between what they see and hear through the public media and between life as it is actually lived in human society round about them on the one hand, and what God's Word on the other hand is saying in this respect?

The graduate tutor has been prepared to listen sympathetically and with understanding to the problems for which our young people seek guidance and greater clarity. Just because he is still a relatively young person, works closely in their midst and is readily available, students are more inclined to turn to a tutor than to an older instructor. Even for the dean they will probably want to reserve their more vexing problems. If in such counseling sessions a tutor finds that students have already been seriously influenced by some of the thinking of the world, he will know that he must avoid being merely horrified, and instead patiently, sympathetically, and carefully guide them to sound Christian thinking.

Again, the graduate tutor is prepared to approach this vital task of counseling with a greater confidence and adeptness. An undergraduate tutor, on the other hand, may himself still lack full clarity on some of these matters and feel unsure about giving the proper scriptural answers. Thus those who come to him will not be well served.

5. Preparation for Tutoring

In the original concept of the tutor and his teaching assignments stress was laid upon his availability for teaching individual students who needed special help in a course or who needed to take care of course deficiencies. This involved tutoring in the narrow sense of working with individuals and with special small classes. This kind of teaching still falls into the realm of the tutor's assignment.

A good knowledge of the subject matter to be imparted and a sympathetic attitude toward the student or students he is asked to tutor would be the main preparation required for these tasks. Such teaching would not make heavy demands for organization, for testing, and for employing a variety of teaching techniques. Such tutoring does not present the difficulty of holding the interest of a large class comprised of many individuals with a variety of aptitudes, abilities, and attitudes, all of which need to be served well.

Both graduate and undergraduate tutors with the necessary dedication could be considered properly prepared for this assignment.

6. Preparation for Teaching

When we distinguish preparation for teaching from preparation for tutoring in the narrow sense, we have in mind the enlistment of the tutor for some of the regular courses of the worker training curriculum and for teaching classes with a normal number of enrolled students. Whether in addition to the tutor assignments which we have already covered, more than one such teaching course should be assigned to a tutor deserves to be earnestly considered and discussed.

Here again only the graduate tutor has been formally prepared for such teaching assignments. He has at least finished a basic course of training for independent work in teaching. He has had a chance to give evidence of his skill and adeptness during a vicarship or during his practice teaching work. Hence he can be chosen on

the basis of what the report on his practical experience says about his aptitude and success with reference to teaching skills.

A graduate instructor with no tutor or only minimal tutor assignments would be able to handle more teaching courses.

The type of courses which tutors should be asked to teach and the grade level of the classes in which he should be asked to teach deserve earnest discussion. Those participating in this seminar who are themselves engaged in teaching on the secondary level, the level at which tutors are principally enlisted for teaching assignments, would be in a position to make the best contribution to this discussion.

I will content myself with simply pointing out a few matters that should deserve consideration in such a discussion. The tendency has been in the direction of using seminary graduate tutors for ninth grade religion courses. As far as the knowledge of the subject matter covered is concerned, seminary students should be quite able to handle it on the ninth grade level. Still, we need to remember that the religion courses are to be the very heart of Christian education. They are to offer the approach from which all the other courses are to be understood. They are to be basic in molding the attitudes of students toward the entire learning process, have an influence on their conduct, and confirm them in the goal of the public ministry, for which our worker training schools exist. Is it therefore a sound policy heavily to enlist tutors, who are still novices in teaching, to handle the religious instruction of ninth graders who have just been recruited for our worker training schools?

Other ninth grade courses likewise lay the foundation for courses to be pursued in the subsequent preparatory school curriculum. We might ask whether the laying of the foundation should not be put into the hands of tried and experienced teachers. We are interested in cutting down the percentage of dropouts in our ninth grades. Does that not demand that in the interest of confirming these recruits in their worker training goal we expose them as much as possible to seasoned and experienced teachers?

One of our preparatory schools, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, is restricted by state regulations even in the use of DMLC graduates to junior high school teaching assignments unless these graduates have become certified through additional training. This has set a policy of making considerable use of tutors in ninth grade teaching.

We may need to give earnest consideration to the matter of possibly providing the required additional training so that the teaching assignments of tutors may be distributed among all the years of the high school curriculum.

Such an arrangement would mean an additional year of study before the tutor actually enters upon his teaching assignment. The additional preparation might even be offered as an option to tutors at other preparatory schools, even though state certification regulations do not hold us to do it. Scholarship funds which the individual preparatory school possesses, or which could be built up for this purpose, might help to finance the arrangement. We would still want to abide by the regulation that graduates are not to serve more than one or two years at a tutor assignment. Even so, it could still be considered a good investment. It would give our synod a larger pool of workers who have had special training and experience for teaching assignments from which to draw for the permanent staffing not only of our area high schools but also of our worker training preparatory schools. It dare never mean, of course, that other workers would no longer be considered for such staffing. Here we will bear in mind that in the past tutor experience played a prominent part in the calling of professors. Many of our worker training professors were former tutors or had previous teaching experience at area high schools. Our Board for World Missions has for some time annually called a seminary vicar for service in a world mission field in the interest of building up a pool for the calling of future world missionaries. At the same time this was never meant to restrict the calling of world missionaries to such a pool.

7. Preparation for Directing and Guiding Extra-Curricular Activities

The use of tutors as aides to the coaches in the athletic programs of our worker training institutions has been a prominent feature in the concept of the tutor from the very beginning. Tutors have been quite satisfactorily chosen for these tasks on the basis of the interest and the aptitudes that they have evidenced in

athletics during their own student life at our preparatory schools and colleges. Since they do not set policies for the athletic program, but merely serve as aides under the policies set by the coaches and the athletic department of the schools, they appear to have had adequate preparation for this assignment. The same thing is undoubtedly true when students are enlisted for other extra-curricular activities. They are enlisted to the extent that they have shown special gifts and aptitudes in these fields. Tutors, for example, who have been organists, choir directors, or even had special additional training and schooling in music, would naturally be called upon to assume tasks in the musical organizations of the schools to which they have been called.

These thoughts on the preparation of tutors ought to suffice for the stimulation of discussion.