

**WELCOME TO  
THEOLOGICAL  
FIELD  
EDUCATION!**

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# 4

## The Use of Case Studies in Field Education

TIM SENSING

Recently, I watched a video about locating and replacing the thermostat on my son's F-150 pickup. As far as auto mechanics is concerned, a thermostat transplant ranks as an easy procedure. Since I had experience replacing brakes, starter motors, and water pumps, I felt I could handle a thermostat. The video, while informative, still left me apprehensive about tearing apart my son's truck. What was the difference between the other repairs and this simple thermostat replacement? My previous experiences with repairs had all involved the helpful guidance of a seasoned technician. This time, as I looked at the engine, I realized I was not ready to fly solo. The video did not supply me with the confidence I needed to take the next step.

As a student minister, you have probably felt the same anxieties about engaging in ministry for the first time, whether it is teaching a class, visiting a hospice patient, serving a meal at a homeless shelter, or leading a meeting. As you approach these intimidating situations, remember that what you will learn from experience will soon become instinct. Take the case of the veteran minister who receives the unexpected news that one of her congregants has just suffered a fatal heart attack. In the midst of an already hectic week, she incorporates pastoral actions that garner congregational resources in

order to serve the family in appropriate ways. She coordinates visitations, plans services, organizes others to prepare meals, and supports the family through the crisis. Without consulting a manual, the minister seems to know in her bones where to be, what to say, and whom to call. Through the process, she also covers the routine duties of her ministry. On Sunday night, she finally falls into bed anticipating a good night's rest. An observant bystander might easily be bewildered by the efficient and caring way the minister responded. After the crisis is over, the onlooker might not be able to articulate how the pastor so adeptly managed such a complex situation. The case of the unexpected funeral is worthy of careful examination. Who wants to face their first funeral unprepared?

Funerals rank high on the list of pastoral responsibilities capable of churning the stomach and raising blood pressure. I recall my first funeral, which occurred just months after my arrival at a small church in southern Indiana. The call came from a man who had not attended services in several years. After catching my breath, I met with the family and prepared my homily. When the graveside service concluded, I was approached by a stranger who said, "My sister's name was not Katherine but Kathleen. Everyone who knew her called her 'Kate.'" Twenty-five years later, I still remember the impact of her words. I turned to the left, and I could not locate a textbook. I turned to the right; my mentor lived miles away. I did not have the experience or the wisdom to navigate the storm. I was knee-deep in ministry, and I was unprepared.

Throughout human history, in various trades and guilds, artisans have passed on the skills and wisdom of their professions to able apprentices. Both Testaments are filled with examples that parallel Paul's axiom, "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you." (Phil. 4:9). Field education gives you the opportunity to engage the various contexts of ministry. You have the opportunity to put into practice what you have learned in texts, from teachers, and from the faith community so that you too will be competent in your ministry. Apprenticeship, however, is not the only pedagogy

your teachers and supervisor-mentors will employ. Another way field educators access the lived experiences of seasoned ministers is through case studies. Case studies introduce you to tasks, dilemmas, and practices of everyday ministry and enhance your confidence for the next time you engage in similar situations.

A short introduction to the theoretical constructs that undergird the case method will enhance your ability to incorporate it into your theological reflection and practice. Cases are learning tools that present stories of actual events and dilemmas faced by real people. Case studies formally examine cases through an assortment of processes common in field education, including ministry reports, verbatims, case histories, and reflections on ethical dilemmas. Utilizing the case method in the classroom or during an internship will enhance your development of analytical, integrative, and decision-making skills and will help you apply what you are learning in other classes. Likewise, they are useful for you to implement in congregational and parachurch settings because they help a diverse group of participants become more creative in addressing community issues. Case studies provide you the opportunity to experience the complexity of ministerial situations in the safety of a classroom. While foreseeing every conceivable contingency is impossible, tapping into the lived experiences of veteran pastors may equip you with greater resources to assimilate and adapt when the unexpected challenge barges into your routine.

Case studies tap into the power of narrative and become a vehicle for understanding lived experiences. Using case studies allows you to impose order on lived experiences, thus making sense of the events, thoughts, and actions in real lives. The experienced minister referred to on the preceding pages who skillfully managed an unexpected funeral had not always known how to respond pastorally to a crisis. She, at one time, stood in your shoes. The first time she assisted with a funeral required her to slow down and observe the senior pastor, make a to-do list, and ask many questions. It took time and experience for her to become the veteran. In due course, her prior

knowledge of funerals and her good caring instincts provided her the capacity to offer mercy and grace.

Through case studies, you will explore the ways others come to know and practice their craft in tacit and unmeasurable ways. Exploring someone's story is one way you are able to incorporate expert and local knowledge about pastoral practice into your professional experience. Case studies examine unspoken understanding and translate it into explicit knowledge, allowing it to be integrated with other resources (biblical, historical, and theological).

My field education students have found the case method an invigorating approach to thinking and learning about ministry vicariously through the lives of other students and pastors who have traveled down the same pathways of ministerial formation and ministerial practices. In my courses, I ask students to analyze the lived experiences of others as a way to reflect upon their own professional identity and practice. Furthermore, the case method involves writing a formal case brief, writing original cases from personal experiences, and presenting cases to others.<sup>1</sup>

## Analyzing a Case

Field education is all about learning by doing. Likewise, the best way to learn about analyzing a case is to do it. The exercises given throughout this chapter will facilitate your ability to incorporate the case method into your reflective practices.

Good cases emerge from current issues and events. Most cases are not timeless and can quickly lose their relevance. For our purposes in this section, I will use an abbreviated scenario that captures the complexity of most cases, given its significant historical context of September 11, 2001. Most pastors vividly remember their own struggles to find words to say after that fateful day. Some of you might recall the sermon preached by your minister. Throughout the land, some preachers attributed this tragedy to God's revenge on what they deemed to be America's sin. Other sanctuaries remained silent, worship leaders not even acknowledging that the events of

Tuesday before had occurred. Yet, everyone who attended worship the weekend following 9/11 had images of falling towers, dying rescue workers, and rubble and soot burned into their heads. They arrived on Sunday, September 16, 2001, with questions, anger, and confusion. They arrived anticipating hearing a word of hope, a note of consolation, and the gospel of God. The case describing this experience, "No Ordinary Sunday," begs for careful analysis.

## NO ORDINARY SUNDAY

Teddy Jackson drove to work on Thursday, September 13, 2001, as he had for the past seventeen years. The events of Tuesday still lingered in his thoughts. Last night's prayer service at the church and then again at the civic center had left him exhausted. Today would be his first day back in the office. The pressing issue before him was what he would preach. Sunday was coming, and he needed time to formulate his thoughts. His mind raced for a moment. What would anyone preach in a time like this? When he arrived at his office, Teddy turned to the lectionary for September 16, Year C. The passages listed included: Jer. 4:11–12, 22–28; Psalm 14; 1 Tim. 1:12–17; and Luke 15:1–10. The task for Thursday lay before him. It was obvious that he would need the rest of the afternoon to sketch out his sermon. Teddy picked up his Bible and began to read 1 Timothy. What could he possibly say that would make any difference?

The dilemma of what to preach on any given Sunday presents itself every week. Ministers throughout the world routinely manage these homiletical decisions. Nevertheless, the case of "No Ordinary Sunday" provides you several different pedagogical avenues to pursue. Depending upon the learning objectives, you could explore the relationship between pastoral care and preaching, the lectionary's role in setting the agenda for the liturgy, hermeneutical approaches for preaching to contemporary issues, among many other options. I often begin a case study by asking my students to identify the most

pressing issues that emerge for them. In this case, they often identify the issues of theodicy because the text in Jeremiah seems harsh and contradicts their interpretation of God's role in the terror attacks. Afterward, I ask students to read and reflect upon *The Sunday After Tuesday: College Pulpits Respond to 9/11* by William Willimon, former dean of the chapter at Duke University.<sup>2</sup>

I use the following handout to help students analyze cases. While you will not always use every bulleted item in the handout, allow it to prompt your imagination and critical thinking skills.

### HOW TO ANALYZE A CASE

- Analyze the case after reading it through several times:
  1. List the characters and note key details about who they are.
  2. Develop a chronology of events. A timeline places essential facts, events, and developments in a logical order that facilitates keeping the facts straight.
  3. Identify the basic issues (especially those things such as acts, values, or attitudes that influence decisions).
  4. List all the positions that reasonable people might take.
  5. If applicable, create an organization chart that establishes the relationships of people, institutions, or decisions presented in the case.
  6. Include decision(s) and decision maker(s) in your list. Identify the chief players and stakeholders, useful information in a case that calls for a decision, or where a character faces difficult challenges. Also, list other actors and interest groups who have differing information, power, or objectives.
- Analysis about a lived experience will offer an answer to these five questions:
  1. What was done (act)?
  2. When or where was it done (scene)?
  3. Who did it (agent)?
  4. How did he or she do it (agency)?
  5. Why was it done (purpose)?<sup>3</sup>

- Let the facts of the case and the possibilities you have considered ferment in your mind. Mull over the case, think about it casually, and let things flow through your imagination.
- Consider any theoretical material or theological resources (for example, church history or tradition, texts, systematic theology) that would be helpful in clarifying the issues in the case.
- Decide on your course of action. What decision would you likely make given the conditions and information you have available? Be prepared to defend or substantiate your decision. Remember that no decision is without risk.
- Participate in the class discussion by sharing your understanding and insights, your ideas and rationale. Listen to what others see in the case; evaluate their positions. Keep an open mind, and be willing to change it with the presentation of new insights or evidence.

### EXERCISE 1

Using the above handout, analyze the case “No Ordinary Sunday.”

Simply analyzing a case is insufficient for helping you to move from a novice learner to a seasoned practitioner. Many students will present their analysis to the class or write a case brief as a graded assignment. A necessary step between analyzing a case and presenting one is writing a case brief. Formalizing your analysis will help you garner the full impact of the case method and assist you as you grow in your competence as a pastor. I use the following handout to describe the process of writing a case brief.

### HOW TO WRITE A CASE BRIEF

- A case brief is a concise document written in response to a specific case.
- Case briefs are short and to the point.
- They focus on a dilemma and describe a decision. Although most dilemmas will have many possible paths, the brief argues for a particular choice.
- Several skills are used in the paper:
  1. The ability to summarize well.

2. The capacity to identify dilemmas and decisions to be made in the case.
3. Sensitivity to the variety of factors that affect the decisions.
4. Application of theology, sociology, ethics, and common sense in a variety of situations.
  - Imagine that you are writing a case brief for the members of the class and will be called on to explain your position. Alternative: prepare the brief as a consultant's report to a church board.
  - Explore conflicting or contrasting positions on the issue. Put an emphasis on being objective (or identify and then bracket your biases). Think with an open mind, and then decide. After you have thought through the alternatives, pick one position to develop. Do not dismiss other perspectives as not applicable, but concentrate on making your position persuasive.
- Possible outline:
  1. Identify the characters.
  2. Summarize the case.
  3. Identify the problem or issues.
  4. Present the facts and theories that are relevant to the issues.
  5. Select and apply a theological construct.
  6. State a conclusion.
  7. Offer your decision that correlates with your conclusion. That is, describe what you would do in a sentence or two. All briefs must include a decision.

## EXERCISE 2

From your analysis of "No Ordinary Sunday" in Exercise 1, write a one-page case brief.

As a student, the case method will enhance your ability to manage the various routine and unexpected demands of serving churches. However, learning to write cases from your own lived experiences will increase your capacity to reflect theologically about ministerial practice. By employing a model of ministerial reflection (see chapter 3), the critical incident you chose to write about will become a

learning tool that will facilitate your growth. And when you share your own case with a peer reflection group, with a mentor, or in a classroom setting, you open your life to a transformative moment.

## Writing a Case

Case studies allow you to examine the lived experiences of others. People tell narratives to make sense of life and experience. Once you have read and analyzed several cases, you begin to feel the impact that this method has for your future teaching and learning. To grow in your use of the case method, you will need to write your own case. When you are reflecting upon the experiences of others through the cases they have written, your ability to incorporate many pastoral practices and integrate ministerial wisdom grows. Now, by writing about your own lived experiences, your professional identity will also continue to develop.

A case is a written description of an authentic event that is fraught with ambiguity. The identities of people, places, and institutions are changed to protect their privacy. The case does not provide all conceivable information, because no one could know everything that happened or what everyone thought. Enough data is provided so that your reader can enter vicariously into the situation. A case is seen through the eyes of one person, the protagonist, who must make a crucial decision about a real-world situation. The case is left open-ended; that is, the reader is not told what decision was made. The reader is expected to study the case and enter into the experience and dilemma of the central character. The basic question becomes, what would I do? The focus in the case method is about owning one's decisions and developing an intelligible rationale for one's stance.

Literary theory is a helpful conversation partner when you first begin to write a case. Most people tell their stories in smaller segments often called episodes. Sometimes the episodes are sequenced according to themes or, more common, time (chronology). When

the story is told, episodes are excluded or included depending upon the purpose and place of the telling. Selection—what episode choices are made for inclusion and exclusion—plays a major role in shaping the content of the narratives. A common narrative sequence as old as Aristotle's Poetics involves conflict, complication, climax, and resolution (denouement). The conflict describes the dilemma, an issue or incident that has no apparent way forward. The great white shark eats the unsuspecting swimmer. Next, the plot thickens through complicating circumstances. The white shark is smarter and stronger than any previously encountered. The usual methods for capturing the beast have resulted in more loss of human life and the local tourist economy is devastated. Eventually, the story line reaches the crucial point of decision and action. From here, there is no going back. Either the great shark hunter succeeds or all is doomed. And then comes the finale. The shark is destroyed, and all people along the coast are saved.

The case study interrupts the plot sequence by leaving the resolution open. The climax of the story is suspended for reflection purposes. Furthermore, stories express the multiplicity of meaning and the interconnectedness of phenomena that resist reducing life to simple formulas, facts, and singular interpretations. Stories accommodate the ambiguity and inconsistency found in everyday experience. By leaving open the rest of the story, you provide your peers the opportunity to grapple with a wide range of possible and reasonable pastoral interventions. If a reflection group analyzing the case takes a different route to resolution than you did, then the possibilities to assess your decisions and actions multiply.

I use the following handout when I am instructing students about writing their first case or when I need to be reminded of the basics.

#### **BASIC GUIDELINES FOR CASE WRITING**

- A good case describes a difficult problem, a dilemma for which no single obvious solution exists. If the solution is obvious, or if the courses of possible action would not produce a difference of opin-

ion, then you do not have the material for a good case. Choose an event or situation that poses a question and requires a decision fraught with sufficient difficulty and ambiguity so that people of intelligence and sensitivity will disagree about what ought to be done. The case can be based on historical events or on personal experiences. Cases that are multifaceted yet reasonably short are most effective.

- A case must describe an actual, not a hypothetical, situation. Nothing will draw participants into the discussion of a case more quickly and intensely than assurance that it really happened or is happening. It may be necessary to disguise a case by changing names or places, but avoid exaggerations, embellishments, or alterations that could prompt readers to doubt the accuracy or truthfulness of the case itself. Select a case in which the participants will be willing to provide you with the information you need to describe the background, the individuals involved, the situation of the dilemma itself, and the possible courses of action. If you write about a personal experience, you will be the source of information.
- A case should be about a question or problem with which many people can identify and in which they have genuine interest. Ask yourself, will the discussion of the case benefit those I will ask to study and discuss it? Early in the process of writing a case, determine your audience, goals, and themes.
- A case is written from one person's perspective. Avoid seeing it through the eyes of everyone involved. Do not attribute feelings or motives to anyone in the case unless the person involved verbalizes them. To write a case from one person's perspective may appear too narrow and exclusive, yet it is how we perceive reality, and we must make decisions based on the limited facts and data available to us.
- A case is a distinct literary form. It is a genre with rules and conventions. It has a certain structure. It is not just a photographic slice of life. A case represents episodes selected from a particular situation by the case writer and is outlined as follows:

1. **Focus:** The first paragraph sets up the dilemma. The case begins with the suspended climax of the plot. The cliffhanger is posed from the outset.
2. **Background:** The next few paragraphs give the setting and history of the case so that the dilemma is understood. All participants would agree about this material. Include sufficient information to give the reader an adequate feeling for the case situation without including unnecessary details. Dialogue, letters, or appendices may be helpful tools in this section of the case. The literary device of flashback is commonly used. In literature, internal *analepsis* is a flashback to an earlier point in the narrative; external analepsis is a flashback to a time before the narrative started.
3. **Development** (the plot thickens): The next several paragraphs develop the plot. Decide whose eyes the case will be seen through. Use limited third person as opposed to omniscient (the all-seeing) perspective. Select material with the case dilemma in mind by interweaving time structure, plot, character development, and action. Do not portray any characters so negatively that others cannot relate to their experience.
4. **Coda:** The last paragraph (or paragraphs) rephrases or highlights the issue or decision. The coda is an *inclusio* with the first paragraph of the case. Like bookends, the first and last paragraphs frame the case by highlighting the dilemma. Ask yourself whether the cutoff point is a good one. Try to avoid ending with a question. Allow the power of suspending the story at a climactic point, a type of cliffhanger, to function to create tension in the reader. Done well, the reader will seek resolution.
  - Pay attention to points of style:
    1. Provide a clear chronology.
    2. Check transition points for clarity.
    3. Try to be an objective reporter of known facts.
    4. Ascribe opinions to those who make them.
    5. Quote when possible.

6. Avoid editorializing.
7. Keep adverbs and adjectives to a minimum.
8. Report body language and physical setting to build reader interest and involvement.
9. Present the case in the past tense.
10. Avoid cute names for characters and places when disguising identity so that the tone of the case will evoke serious attention.

### EXERCISE 3

Write a case study that emerges from your ministry experience. Start with a short scenario before tackling more complex story lines.

### Presenting a Case

Earlier, I described writing a case brief as a formal way to synthesize your analysis of a case. Learning to present a case to a small group or class also develops your understanding of the case and augments your integration of the wisdom garnered from the case into your practice. Because case teaching is such a powerful method for communal discernment, many pastors have found it an effective tool in their own ministries. Church consultants in various disciplines have successfully used cases to mediate the difficult terrain in their respective fields. Learning to present a case in a formal setting will give you a pedagogical tool that you can effectively utilize throughout your tenure as a minister.

Before you present your first case, inform your supervisor-mentor of your teaching plan one day prior to the scheduled class time. There is no substitute for careful planning, and the feedback from an experienced case teacher is priceless. It is customary for an effective teaching plan to cover approximately two hours in order to allow enough time for the group to analyze and reflect upon the case. I use the following handout to describe a typical teaching plan.



## A TEACHING PLAN

(Total class time: 120 minutes)

- *Learning Objectives:* Learning objectives are the tentative outcomes you expect to achieve during the case presentation. Spell out two to four learning objectives that utilize strong verbs. Possible verbs include: *affirm, encourage, demonstrate, synthesize, analyze, appraise, apply, compare and contrast, differentiate, discriminate, prepare, formulate, design, construct, assess, evaluate, and value.* Imagine the possible alternatives. From a list of issues within a single case, various pedagogical aims can be achieved. From a single case, applications are possible from the fields of conflict resolution, leadership, pastoral care, social justice, and missions. A New Testament professor may use the context of a case to engage a class on hermeneutics. A homiletics professor may compare and contrast different scenarios in order to demonstrate the potential of a single text in various contexts. The list is endless and is determined by the particular learning outcomes the teacher has for the students. State these objectives clearly.
- *Distribute the Case:* Allow the group enough time to read the case. (10 minutes)
- *Brainstorming Activity 1—Characters:* Using a white board or large sticky notes, list all the characters involved in the case. Note two to three key identifying characteristics. (10 minutes)
- *Brainstorming Activity 2—Issues:* On a different board or sticky notes, list the issues that emerge from the case. When you suggest an issue, note from what part of the case you deem that it emerges. Ask, "For which of our characters is this issue critical?" (15 minutes)
- *Possible Active Learning Strategies*
  1. Mini-Lecture. A mini-lecture may be delivered before, during, or after the case presentation when appropriate. The lecturer should not preempt the discussion or cut it off by giving the "right answer." Alternative: A guest speaker, resource person, or podcast could be utilized to give a mini-lecture or presentation. (10 minutes)

2. Small Groups. Small-group discussions may provide opportunities for full participation by all those present. The group assignment must be clear, and the teaching plan must allow sufficient time for them to discuss and then to return to the larger gathering. (Pair and Share is another form of small-group discussion that gets everyone involved by simply asking everyone to team up with his or her neighbor.) For example: Divide the class into groups, each representing either one of the characters or a particular issue. Provide the groups with markers and sticky notes so that they can record their discussion. Ask them to do the following (30 minutes):
  - a. Select an issue that emerged in the earlier discussion, one you deem vital for your character to consider.
  - b. Discuss what is most at stake for your character.
  - c. Discuss some of the alternative decisions or actions available to your character.
  - d. Identify possible resources available to your character.
3. Role Play. Role play is often a good follow-up activity to a small-group discussion. Ask the group to discuss possible talking points for the group's assigned character. Pick one person in the group to come in front of the class and play the character. Provide the selected students with large name tags. Reenact or create a scenario for the characters. After the role play, thank the actors. Debrief with the whole class by asking one to two key questions. (20 minutes)
4. Voting or Polling. Asking participants to vote on a key issue before the discussion begins can energize a conversation about the rationale for and implications of various positions. Continuing with "the minority report" (using the opinion of the minority rather than the majority) is often useful. When voting or polling is used, the participants may be divided into pro and con groups. The students' votes place them into two groups that would prepare a point-counterpoint discussion about one of the selected issues.

5. Fishbowl. Fishbowl is a device that allows the facilitator to select a small group of participants (or allow them to volunteer) to discuss pertinent issues, ideas, and solutions in front of the class. The rest of the group listens to the conversation. One modification of this approach is to allow small groups to choose a spokesperson to present the group's discussion. Another is to leave one chair in the discussion circle empty so that listening participants can move in and out of the discussion. In addition, chairs could be labeled to represent certain characters.
  6. Jigsaw. Jigsaw is a means of giving individuals with different information or perspectives an opportunity to share with others. For example, if participants are divided into small groups, and each group is given a different topic, issue, or character to discuss, they spend a designated period completing their assignment. They are then regrouped so that a representative from each small group is included in the new small groups.
- *Wrap-up:* Develop a concluding activity that brings closure to the presentation. For example, you might distribute a questionnaire:
    - (1) What have we learned from this case? (2) Choose one character. How would you handle the situation? (3) What wisdom do we as interns garner from the case? The purpose of the questionnaire (or a final writing assignment) allows the student to concisely describe how they understand the case and what concrete lessons they will apply to their own practice in the future.
  - *Thank everyone for participating.*

#### EXERCISE 4

From the bibliography, select and teach a case in a peer reflection group. Ask your supervisor-mentor to serve as a nonparticipant observer who will give you critical feedback on your performance.

Many case facilitators advise not teaching your own case. The opportunity for greater learning occurs when you observe someone else teach your case.

#### EXERCISE 5

Observe another student teaching your case to a peer reflection group. Let your supervisor-mentor use a group of students who are not familiar with your context. Videotaping the session will preserve your anonymity. In addition, videotaping will create emotional distance for you to assess the process openly and critically.

### A Note to Field Educators and Supervisor-Mentors: Using Cases as a Field Educator

Teaching and supervising students are professional disciplines containing practices, tools, and techniques. Good teachers critically reflect on what they do and why they do it as they engage in their practice. Capricious engagement in the teaching craft leads to banal and ineffective service at best and only occasionally stumbles upon healthy acts. Therefore, astute teachers articulate and incorporate active learning strategies into their practice.

The case method is a powerful active learning tool. To be effective case facilitators, field educators and supervisor-mentors will want to implement the skills of writing and presenting cases. While the literature contains hundreds of good pastoral cases, nothing compares to providing students with your own lived experiences. Sometimes I share with students that a case is from my own ministry. The openness and vulnerability displayed foster a positive and empathetic learning environment. At other times, I have left the case anonymous so that the students will be free to disagree, offer alternatives, and challenge decisions and actions. Finally, writing and presenting my own cases allows me to nuance and facilitate the learning opportunity in richer and deeper ways than are otherwise possible with a case written by a stranger.

Practical theology prospers in the arena of community discernment. Teachers who foster collaborative learning styles, problem solving, and consensus making through community discernment will

enable successful future congregational leaders. Teachers should not be about cultural reproduction or reaffirmation of time-honored beliefs. Instead, the classroom should encourage community development and foster dialogue. The teacher sets the stage for dialogue. The interchange needs to include a multiplicity of perspectives and a diversity of voices; otherwise, the conversation will only talk about the same old things in the same old ways.

How is the teacher supposed to foster communal activities? Good teaching has always relied upon models and mentors. Students begin to figure out the process by watching the ways in which it is done (models) by different ministry artists (mentors). Field educators recognize the value of exemplars who model not only good practice but also attitudes, feelings, values, and virtues. How teachers care, reach out, build trust and mutual respect, and encourage their students to reach their maximum potential is teaching more than facts, skills, and techniques. The case method, at its most basic function, is just another model and mentor that fosters the dialogic process of communal discernment.

Good teachers encourage exploration and adventure. The art, skills, and models are brought into relationship with one another as students experiment and explore their own styles and try out their own leadership wings. They adapt, assimilate, modify, grow, and see their own potential and future. The classroom (whether in or outside of four walls) allows such adventure within a safe environment. Students gather and analyze data in a controlled and disciplined environment so that they can navigate informed modifications in their practices, beliefs, and attitudes. The classroom's design should foster a climate that allows students to utilize different ways of knowing in the learning process. Learning has cognitive, affective, visual, mechanical, intuitive, aesthetic, ethical, and logical characteristics. The students are asked to stretch, experiment, and risk in order to develop their potential. The teacher joins them on the journey, and the theological process takes precedence over product. The case method complements good teaching.

Continual attention to faculty development is a key component to your growth as an academic professional. Writing and presenting case studies enhances your portfolio. More important, significant impact upon student maturation is facilitated through effective implementation of the case method. Teaching a student to exercise pastoral ministry within the life of the church is like teaching an artist to paint. The classroom provides the student with a focused opportunity not only to paint but also to show others how to paint. As the teacher engages students in the classroom, she will mold their giftedness by mixing in some craft along the way. She will guide, encourage, and allow students to continue the process of becoming who they are called by God to be and to reflect the incarnate Word within the larger community. The teacher's pastoral leadership will encourage students to become distinct voices within community, witnessing to their experience of the gospel and their maturation in Christ.