

Chapter Five

Mentoring

Back in the days when sons worked with their fathers to provide life's necessities, role modeling was a natural part of life. In earlier days, apprenticeships were also a form of a mentoring relationship. Young people had the opportunity to learn a trade or craft by observing and developing skills under a master craftsman's direction. Meanwhile, daughters learned the skills necessary for family care while they worked with their mothers to prepare food and perform other household duties. Extended family members also insured that many other skills were passed to the next generation.

Mentoring experienced a surge of interest during the 1990s. Perhaps this was a result of people realizing they were separated from their biological families. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins were not available to fill the roles of mentor, teacher, encourager, discipler, and coach.

Today a variety of words describe relationships that resemble role models and mentoring. These include mentor, teacher, encourager, discipler, and coach. While nuances may distinguish the relationships, the ultimate goal is consistent: one person helping another grow.

Single Adult Ministries is an excellent place for role modeling and mentor relationships to develop. Role modeling often happens naturally as single adults watch other single adults and incorporate the positive traits they see into their own lives.

What is Role Modeling?

Role models are often people whose behaviors and skills are observed from a distance or learned about through reading. Those people may or may not be aware that they are serving as a role model. Role models may or may not have a personal relationship with the individuals who see them as examples. Role models provide examples for individuals to follow during times of specific need, in a profession, or through new experiences.

As mentioned before, role modeling can occur without a personal relationship. Many people find wisdom and value by reading books or articles about people who are role models in society or in the Christian world. Some people tell how reading books by the saints of yesteryear

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have motivated them to develop their Christian faith. Knowing that others all through time have struggled with integrating Christianity into all aspects of life has encouraged them. For example, *In His Steps* and *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* are just two of many books written years ago that continue to influence Christians today.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring was a basic element of life before the 1900s. It occurred naturally as boys and girls learned farming, gardening, and life survival skills while working with their parents. Mentoring was the chief learning method as artisans invested time and taught skills to apprentices. At one time, the university system revolved around a student learning in the scholars' homes. Mentoring occurred in royal courts as knights taught warriors' skills to the novices. In the eighteenth century, people like Jonathan and Sarah Edwards frequently had one or more "disciples" living in their homes to observe marriage and personal spiritual dynamics.

When we research mentoring, we see that definition of mentoring varies with each author. However, some commonalities tie the definitions together. In *Connecting*, Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton define mentoring as "a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources." In *Mentoring*, Bobb Biehl adds time references to his definition: "Mentoring is a lifelong relationship, in which a mentor helps a protégé reach her or his God-given potential."

Mentors share lessons they have learned, extend helping hands, and become safety lines of love and affirmation to those following them. The *Word in Life Study Bible* stresses the giving aspect of mentoring by describing it as a "voluntary investment in others for their growth, development, and success." This definition is expanded to include faith in the value of the mentoree and the benefits for this individual. Because of this value of the learner, mentoring may require loving sacrifice from the mentor. Howard Hendricks from Dallas Theological Seminary describes mentors as individuals involved in a process. Mentors are committed to help people grow, to keep them growing, and to assist them as they realize their life goals.

A look at the lives of biblical personalities and Christian leaders, we find references to, and experiences of, mentoring relationships. Moses prepared Joshua for the transition of leadership as the Israelites entered Canaan. Eli helped Samuel develop into a man who listened to God's voice and spoke to the nation. Priscilla and Aquilla disciplined Apollos, taught him essentials for the faith, and sponsored his ministry. Barnabas stood behind Paul, the persecutor-turned-convert, as he introduced him to

church leaders and testified of his conversion. Assisted by Barnabas' mentoring, Paul became the outstanding leader of the New Testament church. Paul recruited Timothy and passed along the importance of mentoring by building on the foundation Timothy's mother and grandmother had laid in the young man's life.

Need for Mentors

In *Counseling Single Adults* Doug Fagerstrom suggests people need five different types of relationships in their lives: parent figure; role model; casual friend; intimate friend; and spiritual director, which is someone who comes alongside and helps you reach your spiritual goals. As people mature, the function of these relationships may change. The mentor who fills one of these relationships during a person's childhood may not continue to fill that role when the person reaches adolescence or adulthood.

As technology increases, growing number of people find themselves isolated. Equipment advances make it possible for individuals to work at home. E-mail and fax machines offer quick communication, but lack personal contact. Increasing numbers of people spend time communicating with others they may never meet. The need for mentors increases as this sense of isolation continues to grow.

Changes in the family structure often leave some people without an effective model for fathering or mothering. Those reared by a single parent frequently face unique fears as they enter marriage. While they may ask the same questions entering marriage as those who weren't raised in divorced homes, they are more likely to wonder if they will repeat the pattern of divorce or break the cycle. Adults who were raised by abusive or emotionally absent parents also look for others to teach and model effective parenting.

Characteristics of a Mentor

Some common characteristics are found in most mentoring relationships. These include:

- ✓ Ability to see the potential in individuals.
 - ✓ Tolerance to see the potential beyond mistakes and difficult personality traits.
 - ✓ Flexibility in responding to the individual and situations.
 - ✓ Patience and perseverance as gifts, talents, and abilities develop.
 - ✓ Perspective and the ability to see down the road as the basis for the next step.
 - ✓ The gifts and abilities to encourage others.
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Mentors also give timely advice, write letters of encouragement, and provide helpful information from articles, books, and other sources. Mentors are willing to risk their reputations as they give the mentored person opportunities to develop leadership skills. Mentors encourage mentorees to reach beyond their accomplishments to accept the challenges of a new generation. Mentors invite their disciples to come alongside them and learn while doing. Eventually, the roles reverse as the mentored ones accept new roles—the mentors then step into helping roles.

Ideal mentors structure the mentoring relationship, conversations, and activities to help protégés reach their God-given potential. These mentors remember the relationship is a two-way street. While mentors teach skills and model behaviors, they are also willing to learn from the one they are mentoring.

Beginning a Mentoring Relationship

A mentoring relationship may be initiated by either the one who wants to mentor, or the one who wants to be mentored. Women should always be mentored by other women, and men by other men. At the beginning of this relationship, both people should take time to determine what they are willing to commit to and invest in the relationship.

What kind of questions should you cover as you evaluate starting a mentoring relationship?

- ✓ How easily do we communicate?
- ✓ How well do we relate to each other?
- ✓ What areas will the mentoring relationship involve?
- ✓ What are the expectations of the mentor and mentored?
- ✓ How frequently and for how long will we meet?
- ✓ Are our philosophies of life compatible?
- ✓ Are we both Christians? If not, how will this affect the relationship?

While professional mentoring relationships may not demand that both individuals be Christians, we need to exercise caution about entering such relationships. Even with the focus on professional or work-related mentoring, Christianity is a lifestyle that permeates all aspects of life. Therefore, relationships involving a non-Christian and Christian may be less than effective because of different life perspectives.

Wait until you feel it is God's time to begin a mentoring relationship. Forced relationships or those resulting from pressure may not have the commitment necessary to foster true mentoring.

Identifying a Mentor or Mentoree

I will never forget the first day of my teaching career. The teachers eagerly surrounded the desk of the principal's secretary for the first glimpse of their class lists. The other second grade teachers quickly formed a group as they scanned their list looking for "the name." With a sigh of relief, they looked from one to another attempting to pinpoint the unfortunate person. A first grade teacher looked over my list and marked one name. I realized "the name" was on my list.

Before long, I understood the others' apprehension about this student. I also remember how willing other first and second grade teachers were to help me during that school year. They listened to my frustrations, offered advice, and made suggestions for coping with that student.

While it was not part of a formal relationship, I reflect fondly on that mentoring I received from those teachers. Sometimes I asked for advice and at other times mentoring just happened during recess, over lunch, and at various meetings. Those relationships laid a foundation for me to build on during my teaching career.

Consider the people you know who are ten or more years younger than you are. Name three individuals in whom you see potential, ones you would like to get to know better, and share some common interests. These interests may be work or career related, similar experiences, or other shared interests. These commonalities open the door for a mentoring relationship.

As you contemplate beginning a mentoring relationship, consider these questions.

For the Mentor:

1. *Do I suggest a mentoring relationship or do I wait to be asked?*
While a mentoring relationship may begin either way, one person must take the initiative. Who asks is not the important issue—establishing a relationship is. Due to the commitment of attention, interest, and encouragement, often the mentor first approaches the person she wishes to mentor.
2. *What time commitment does a mentoring relationship involve?*
Each relationship is unique. Common interests, needs, and proximity are usually determining factors as you analyze the time commitment. If you live near each other, you may meet weekly or monthly. Some mentoring relationships are long distance with infrequent personal visits, maintaining contact by phone, fax, e-mail, and letters. Other relationships are based on an as-needed frequency. At first, you may need to invest extra time in the rela-

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- relationship to become better acquainted and relaxed with each other. Relationship-building times can include walks; come-with-me invitations as you perform various duties and responsibilities; or spontaneous encounters that forge your relationship.
3. *What topics will you discuss during meeting times?* The meeting agenda is set by the mentoree's needs. Discussions may include focus on decisions the mentoree needs to make; problems for which the mentor can offer insights; listening as the mentoree reaches a conclusion; update of concerns from previous meetings; reports of progress; prayer requests.
 4. *Where do these meetings occur?* Anywhere you can enjoy personal, in-depth talk. Meetings may occur in restaurants over a meal or something to drink. At times, depending on the topics to cover, you may want a more private location—a walk in a park, your home, or your office. Remember much of mentoring is sharing your life with the person you are mentoring. Mentoring is an attitude more than a setting.
 5. *How much advice do I offer?* Sometimes advice is asked for and accepted. Other times, the mentoree simply needs an opportunity to talk and gain another perspective to a situation. When you give advice, remember the mentoree decides what to do with it. The goal is not to make a clone of yourself, but to help the mentoree develop God-given potential and abilities.
 6. *How will I know when to end the relationship?* Ending or changing any relationship is difficult. A relationship may naturally die due to changing interests and needs or from a conflict. Whatever causes the change, make sure you maintain open communication so both people feel positive. Make sure you convey care, honesty, and fairness. Be sure to use “I” statements. End the discussion by assuring the mentoree of your continued interest and support. Leave the door open for the future, too.
 7. *Should I loan money to my mentoree?* Though you might be tempted, loaning money can hurt a mentoring relationship, even if you take precautions of signing formal papers.
 8. *What is the confidentiality level?* Extremely high. Never discuss with others information you shared or gained through a mentoring relationship.

Desirable Characteristics in a Mentoree:

1. The individual is a person of integrity. As you look at this per-
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- son, you see potential and someone in whom you want to invest time and energy.
2. The individual is enjoyable. You want to see this person succeed. This is someone you are willing to invest in for a lifetime. This individual is a person with whom you can be comfortable.
 3. The individual is open to being nurtured and is an eager disciple. Look for someone who wants to learn from the experiences of others. A teachable attitude is a basic requirement for a mentoring relationship.
 4. The individual is self-motivated. As the relationship progresses, this individual should take some responsibility for setting up meeting times and contacting you.

For the Person Being Mentored

As you consider a mentoring relationship, look for a person who is more experienced than you, believes in you, indicates an interest in your well-being, enjoys being with you, and encourages you. The following characteristics are important as you identify potential mentors.

1. Mentors are honest with you. Honesty does not mean being critical; it reflects a willingness to help you face tough issues. Because the mentors are interested in your well-being, they are willing to address uncomfortable issues. Ideal mentors are honest, caring, and fair.
 2. Mentors are a model for you. Remember the goal is developing your full potential—not to become a clone of the mentors. Mentors, however, should be people who live with integrity.
 3. Mentors are deeply committed to you. The Scriptures contain examples of mentoring; Jesus and the disciples, Priscilla and Aquila, Paul and Timothy, Saul and Annaias. These examples show how individuals walked with others as they faced new experiences.
 4. Mentors are open and approachable. Mentors share success stories as well as stories about situations that didn't turn out so successfully. It is important for you to see both sides and to learn that life goes on.
 5. Mentors are good teachers. Mentors explain the "how" and "why" behind tasks and decisions and give you opportunities to learn new skills.
 6. Mentors believe in your potential. Mentors are your cheerleaders. As you talk to mentors about discouraging times, they will encourage you to keep going, even when you may want to quit.
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7. Mentors help define your dreams and develop plans to achieve them. This involves clarifying your dreams and determining how realistic they are. Part of the mentoring process is refining dreams into achievable goals.
8. Mentors are successful in your eyes; people you want to be like. This does not necessarily mean successful by the world's standards. Success should be defined as following God's leading.
9. Mentors are willing to learn from you. Mentors model teachability while teaching. Ideal mentoring relationships are a two-way street, with both of you giving to and receiving from each other.
10. Mentors are willing to follow your agenda. You determine the topics you will discuss during your times together.

As your mentoring relationship develops, be sure to thank your mentor. While your mentor does not expect any kind of compensation, sincere appreciation is always acceptable. Share how you have benefited from your time together. Be considerate of your mentor's availability and work together to determine meeting times and places. Express the admiration and love you feel for your mentor. Although watching you grow and develop is rewarding, your mentor will enjoy hearing you express those words.

Implications of Mentoring for Single Adult Ministries

Mentoring is not another program or ministry under the umbrella of Single Adult Ministries. Most successful mentoring relationships occur when single adults see others they'd like to be mentor by or to mentor.

The role of Single Adult Ministries is educational. We provide information and create opportunities for single adults in all strata of life to become acquainted. As they develop relationships and friendships, mentoring opportunities naturally evolve. New Christians become acquainted with mature Christians who provide encouragement as they live the Christian lifestyle; life-long Church of the Nazarene members share our denomination's history with new Nazarenes. Additionally, the Single Adult Ministries Director may demonstrate mentoring as she works with future leaders to develop their skills, and as she gives them opportunities to use these skills.

Consider the single adults in your congregation. Who has the potential to be a future Single Adult Ministries Director? Who are the new Christians who could benefit from another person discussing the

implications of Christianity on their lives? Who are the new Nazarenes that need to understand the Wesleyan/holiness perspective and the influence of the Church of the Nazarene world-wide?

Begin applying this information with Single Adult Ministries Council members. Role-modeling has many merits. However, you'll have a deeper and longer-lasting effect through mentoring. Become better acquainted and gradually implement leadership information as you become a mentor.

Summary

Mentoring is deliberately selecting another single adult in whom you are willing to invest yourself to help achieve life goals. Mentoring is not evangelism, discipling, modeling, or coaching. Mentoring is based on the needs of the mentoree and revolves around the mentor helping meet those needs. Mentoring requires a long-term commitment of time, energy, and availability. Mentoring draws from life experiences and requires a dedication to the agenda of the mentoree.

As you mentor council members, develop strategies for educating other single adults about mentoring, and ultimately, inform the entire congregation. One of the hallmarks of young adults is their need for relationships. Mentoring may be the key to reaching them.

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Selected Resources:

Bauknight, Brian Kelley. *Body Building: Creating a Ministry Team Through Spiritual Gifts*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

Biehl, Bobb. *Mentoring: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996.

Brestin, Dee. *The Friendships of Women*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995.

Hunt, Susan. *Spiritual Mothering*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1992.

Icenogle, Gareth Weldon. *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Parrott, Leslie. *Motivating Volunteers in the Local Church*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1991.

Stanley, Paul D. and J. Robert Clinton. *Connection: The Mentoring Relationship You Need to Succeed in Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992.

Differences Among Evangelism, Discipleship, Mentoring

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Mentoring is one of many terms used interchangeably. While there may be elements of the various roles involved in mentoring, Biehl makes distinctions among these roles. The following charts state these differences.

EVANGELISM	DISCIPLESHIP	MENTORING
Is it scriptural? Taught and modeled in scripture	Taught and modeled in scripture	Modeled in scripture
Models in scripture Paul	Timothy	Barnabas
How great is the need? Desperate	Desperate	Desperate
Primary basis of interchange Content	Content	Relationship
Type of role Convincing non-believers and defending the faith. Presenting the Good News	Teaching new believers spiritual truths in all aspects of life	Caring for and helping a person
Whose agenda? Evangelist's agenda (the gospel)	Discipler's agenda (spiritual disciples)	Protégé's agenda (goals/problems)
Training required? Person equipped as evangelist	Academic knowledge and personal mastery of the spiritual disciplines	Pastoral life experience relevant to protégé
Time frame Less than one hour (typically)	Limited time course of study	Life-long as needed

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Long-term commitment required Low	Low	High
Focus of time together Presenting the salvation opportunity	Teaching the spiritual disciplines	Supporting toward maturity in all areas of life
Importance of personal chemistry Respect required	Respect required	Respect and personal chemistry both required
Approximate involved Possibly thousands evangelized over a lifetime	Possibly hundreds disciplined over a lifetime	Typically one to twelve mentored over a lifetime
Modern role parallels Brilliant, articulate, evangelist/apologist	Discipled mature teacher	Loving aunt, uncle, or close (more experienced) friend
Essential message Repent, you must be saved! The kingdom of God is at hand.	To mature spiritually, here is what you need to know, do or become.	How can I help you get where you are going?
