

CONNECTING

The mentoring relationships you need to succeed in life

By: Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton

Mentoring is a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources. The resources vary.

Mentoring is a positive dynamic that enables people to develop potential.

Mentoring is a form of discipleship relationship. But as people grow in Christian maturity and ministry responsibilities other forms of relationships are needed.

1. Relationships that make a difference

What needed is someone to talk to who has walked down the path another person is just beginning.

Biblical examples: Eli – Samuel, Elijah – Elisha, Moses – Joshua, Barnabas – Paul, Paul – Timothy.

Throughout humanity mentoring was the primary means of passing on knowledge and skills in every field. In modern age the learning process shifted. Now it relies primarily on computers, classrooms, books, videos, etc. The relational connection between the knowledge-and-experience-giver and the receiver has weakened or is nonexistent. People have become relationally deficient and narrow-minded. Many fear the transparency in a mentor relationship; they feel that their vulnerability is a sign of weakness.

High pressure from internal drive and external demands – perceived and real – leaves a person in need. It is important to have a ministry philosophy to provide the basis for decisions and priority in ministry.

A mentor wants:

- to be a brother/sister
- challenge your thinking
- caution where appropriate
- share what he has learned
- pray specifically

Anyone can mentor, provided he has learned something from God and is willing to share with others what he has learned. Discipling is the first and most basic mentoring type.

Seven mentoring types:

- discipler
- spiritual guide
- coach
- counselor
- teacher
- model
- sponsor

2. Understanding Mentoring

In our individualistic society there is a tremendous relational vacuum and lack of accountability. People cling to personal independence, but what is needed is interdependence.

God did not create people to be self-sufficient. There is a swelling cry for meaningful relationships.

Empowerment is the increased capacity of the mentoree generated by the mentoring relationship and the resources shared.

People who influence others:

- ability to readily see potential in a person
- tolerance with mistakes, brashness, abrasiveness in order to see that potential developed
- flexibility in responding to people and circumstances
- patience – time and experience are needed for development
- perspective – a vision to see the next step
- gifts and abilities that build up and encourage

Mentors give: timely advice, books, letters, finances, freedom.....

Mentors risk their own reputation in order to sponsor.

Mentors model various aspects of leadership.

Mentors direct to needed resources.

Mentors co-minister.

There are various levels of involvement:

- **intensive**
 - discipler, who teaches the basics of following Christ
 - spiritual guide, who offers direction, accountability, insights
 - coach who motivates and trains
- **occasional**
 - counselor who gives timely advice, corrects, gives perspective
 - teacher who gives knowledge
 - sponsor who helps with career guidance and gives protection
- **passive**
 - contemporary or historical models

The mentoring relationship needs three additional factors or dynamics to bring about empowerment:

1. Attraction – as attraction increases, trust, confidence and mentoring subjects develop that will strengthen the mentoring relationship and ensure empowerment.
2. responsiveness – the attitude is crucial – a willingness to learn
3. Accountability – mutual responsibility, periodic review and evaluation. The mentor should take responsibility for initiating and maintaining accountability.

Mutual commitment is necessary for growth and change. With a commitment there is safety, focus, sincerity, a follow-through until growth takes place.

3. Intensive Mentoring: The Discipler

1. Discipler

He helps the new believer to grow in the basics of a disciple's life, basic skills necessary to know and obey Jesus Christ as Lord.

Why is discipleship so appealing today?

Most people who were socialized in the last three decades suffer from a lack of discipline. They often long for clarity and practical help. Many people who became believers in recent years are products of dysfunctional family situations.

A well-designed discipleship experience instills a basic Christ-centered spirituality – a foundation for a life-time of following Christ. At the heart of the discipleship lies the concept of the centrality and lordship of Christ in believer's lives. From this centrality there is the recreation of the inner being, which shapes your values, attitudes, motives and behavior. Development of your inner being requires that you establish some basic spiritual disciplines of habits in your devotional life. Establishing right habits is vital!

Our character is a composite of our habits!

Sow a thought – reap an action;

Sow an action – reap a habit;

Sow a habit – reap a character;

Sow a character – reap a destiny!

A disciple needs to establish habits that will affect his/her character and destiny. Habits are developed through a combination of knowledge, skill and desire. These disciplines/habits focus strongly on the inner life, and then are reflected outwardly in relationships with others and behavior.

Marks of a disciple: obey His word – love others – bear fruit – complete surrender

Four basic, important growth habits:

1. **devotions** – intake of Scripture; intimate prayer
2. **Word intake** – from Scripture and others for a perspective on life and ministry; application of Scripture (obedience)
3. **Relationships** – regular meetings with others; necessary for correction, edification, encouragement, worship, guidance
4. **Ministry** – must feel a concern that others come to faith; intercessory prayer; start discipling others; use gifts in ministry, show fruits;

What is important in a mentor-relationship?

For the disciple:

- select carefully – check out the available mentors; ask others
- be faithful – do the assignments given; be responsive
- spend time with the mentor in various situations; learning comes often through modeling
- remember the goal – to know and follow Christ

For the discipler:

- select carefully – one or two at a time; look for teachable attitude, common interest and background; clarify the goal
- establish growth habits in the four important areas mentioned above
- discern uniqueness – spiritual gifts, natural abilities, acquired skills
- disciple along giftedness – if necessary ask somebody else to develop certain gifts in the mentoree
- know when to turn loose – bring from dependence to independence

4. Intensive Mentoring: The Spiritual Guide

A spiritual check-up:

Vital signs:

- pulse – intimacy and devotion to Christ

- what do you talk to God about?
 - what is He saying?
 - What are you learning about Him?
- blood pressure – response to daily circumstances like challenges, difficulties, disappointments, unexpected changes
 - when do I bring God into a situation?

Annual marriage check-up to ensure that marital basics like communication, conflict resolution, financial priorities, decisions, intimacy and children were developing and that bad habits haven't crept in through neglect and busyness.

The primary contributions of a Spiritual Guide are accountability, decisions, insights concerning questions, commitments, and direction affecting spirituality and maturity. He/she facilitates spiritual development and maturity at crucial junctions.

A Spiritual Guide is a godly, mature follower of Christ, who shares knowledge, skills and basic philosophy on what it means to increasingly realize Christlikeness in all areas of life.

Disciplining is training intensive,
 Spiritual Guide-mentoring is reflective intensive.
 A Spiritual Guide will move you on to interdependence.
 He/she:

- sorts out motives,
- strengthens values,
- encourages right thinking and action!

When do you need a Spiritual Guide?

- for a regular spiritual check-up
- when you reached a plateau in personal, spiritual or ministry growth
- when you repeatedly ask questions about growth
- when you experience a need for an attitude or motivational change
- if you are in a place of spiritual authority or influence and have no intimate accountability with someone. The true power to lead and minister comes from the inner life. The key to staying strong and growing is to closely monitor your inner life growth.

Spiritual guides need to know God and His Word, grow in both and need to know life – understand its challenges, persevere in difficulties, be humble in times of blessing, and pursue His will in the midst of temptation. Godly wisdom is recognized by the fruit of a life. The true power to lead and minister comes from the inner life. The key to staying strong and growing is to closely monitor the inner life.

5. Intensive Mentoring: The Coach

A coach is particularly important when you step into a new responsibility or try to do something you have never done before. A coach teaches how to win and how to lose. S/he helps you do more than you think you can do. **The coach's central thrust is to provide motivation and impart skills and application to meet a task or challenge.**

Most coaching relationships are initiated by the mentoree as he becomes aware of his need. Potential coaches who are aware of people who need coaching should feel free to offer. Clarifying the need area and expectations of the coach and mentoree are important. One understanding that should be discussed is at what point the coaching relationship is finished. A key to good coaching is observation, feedback and evaluation. A coach seeks to inspire and equip with the necessary motivation, perspective and skills to enable to excellent performance and effectiveness. Experience is the teaching vehicle, but don't forget the power of evaluated experience. Coaches usually know the subject they deal with inside and out. They have an overall grasp. They can break good performance down into basic skills that must be learned. They can assess the mentoree's motivation and skill level and adapt appropriately. Good coaches know how to encourage and strengthen mentorees to do what is necessary to develop the skills and attitudes that will lead to excellence. Coaching is a relational process in which a mentor, who knows how to do something well, impart those skills to a mentoree who wants to learn them. Coaching-mentors focus on teaching how to do things.

The mentoring dynamics of coaching

Attraction is crucial to effective coaching. Good coaches have an eye for talent. They recognize people whom they can help become better. And they attempt to move toward a relationship that will allow for mentoring. People facing challenges want to do better and search for coaches who can help them reach higher levels of performance. Attraction goes both ways. The relationship is very important. To learn skills usually takes discipline. Therefore there needs to be established some type of agreed accountability with the mentoree. This needs to be discussed at the beginning of the relationship, when expectations are clarified. Accountability will keep the mentoree working on basic skills until he can perform. If something grows rapidly and everyone is so ministry oriented the danger is that little thought is given to long-range planning, staff development, internal communication, and fostering staff relationships. Staff members may show then signs of this neglect. It is important to identify the critical points.

Functions of the coach

1. imparts skills (frequently knowledge is involved also)
2. imparts confidence and understanding in the use of those skills
3. motivates people so as to bring out the best in them, usually stretching them beyond what they thought they were capable of.
4. models the importance of learning the basics of a skill
5. points the mentoree to other appropriate resources and links them up with them
6. observes the mentoree in action
7. evaluates the mentorees experience and gives feedback to enhance self-learning and development.

Hints for the coach

To be an effective coach you should:

1. Identify sets of important skills you have; know your repertoire – what you do well and how you coach those skills.
2. Recognize the basic pattern that like attracts like in terms of personality, natural abilities, spiritual gifts. Be on alert for those who are drawn to you and may need your skills.
3. Be open to take people with you and let them see you when you use your skills.
4. Model well! People who can do things well instill confidence and inspire others.

Hints for the mentoree

1. Clarify your challenge or task and the skills you need to be effective.

2. Search and pray for a potential coach who demonstrates good experience in your needed skill areas.
3. Set out to establish a relationship that will lead to mentoring. Coaches want responsive people. Be willing to pay the price and be responsive.
4. Set up a growth contract – what you want to happen (expectations), what will be done to bring it about, and how long the mentoring should last.

Leaders in positions of wide influence have a special need for Spiritual Guides to enhance vital accountability in areas of integrity and to face the temptations that usually accompany such positions. The wise will search out coaches who can help them develop and sharpen their ministry skills and become more effective. One of the best ways to sharpen your own skill is to teach it to another.

6. Occasional Mentoring: The Counselor

“Occasional mentoring” describes people who help for short periods of time in very specific ways. There are three types:

- counselor
- teacher
- sponsor

They make special developmental contributions at appropriate times. Often we don’t see all the factors influencing our lives and decisions or know how to prioritize and interpret them .

The central thrust of a counselor is timely advice and impartial perspective on the mentoree’s view of self, others, circumstances and ministry.

Life should be seen in the context of multiple generational relationships, where there is a constant flow of energy, experience, wisdom and commitment. In the West individualism has been lifted up to the point of unhealthy and dangerous independence. Where is the opportunity to sit together, share and learn from one another in the vertical age and experience spectrum? If more counselor connections were made, both informally and formally, the Body of Christ would be healthier, wiser, and more powerfully growing and affecting lives.

Mentors need to be always thinking mentoring and be alert for counseling opportunities. It can be a timely word of advice, or an extended experience, or become specialized and lead on to an ongoing relationship helping to work through issues that relate to past decisions and experiences. Intervention is a deliberate initiative by the mentor when s/he senses need and has freedom of access in the relationship. The amount of time spent together is NOT an issue. But appropriateness and timeliness of advice are. Empowerment occurs as the advice is applied. Accountability is less of a factor, but is important if change and follow-through are needed.

8 major empowerment functions of a counselor-mentor

1. Encouragement:
 - a. imparts hope –
 - b. gives expectations for further development
2. Soundboard:
 - a. listens well, focused,
 - b. gives provocative feedback,
 - c. provides objectivity to ideas
3. Major evaluation:
 - a. Points out inconsistency in thought or view point
 - b. Tests ideas for soundness

4. Perspective:
 - a. Gives perspective at needy times
 - b. Relates present happenings to the big picture
 - c. Sees positive potential even in negative situations
5. Specific advice:
 - a. In a specific situation
 - b. Gives alternative choices presenting options and possible outcomes
 - c. Leaves the final decision making to the mentoree
6. Linking:
 - a. Links with needed resources like literature, people, finances, ideas
7. Major guidance:
 - a. Gives guidance where major decisions need to be taken
 - b. Views the broader framework of life's various stages
 - c. Gives sound advice and a life perspective
8. Inner healing:
 - a. Specially gifted or trained counselor-mentors can deal with basic issues in a life that hinder growth