

Reflections on a Mentor

Having already read “Those who accompany us on our spiritual journey, “(click on “others” in the sentence before “mentor”), you understand the dynamic interplay between you, your ministry coach, growth partner and others. Below you will find additional discussions that expand and illustrate the role of a mentor:

Mentoring and being mentored are crucial components of leadership development. “Being mentored is like wind in your sails.” As a missionary, by definition you are a leader; and therefore part of your task is to “equip” those whom God places in your life. Tim Elmore (*Mentors*) uses some additional word pictures to explain the functions of mentors:

✂ *Give them laboratories* – provide safe places to practice things discussed together

✂ *Give them roots* – lay the foundation of a values-based life, from which good decisions can be made

✂ *Give them handles* – distill the truth, making the complex simple

✂ *Give them wings* – empower them to explore the depths of their own potential, expecting God to do great things through themselves

Mentoring for you may mean meeting with a young woman in the youth group, advising a couple leading a small group or counseling a new professor in the Bible school where you teach. Being aware of the many kinds of mentoring will help you understand your role as God brings those into your life who need mentored (check out “*Sharing/others*”).

All of us profit from the help of a mentor. Whether they are on-site or at distance, contemporaries or historical figures, mentors are invaluable. Dr. Leith Anderson speaks to this (“Conviction Amidst Uncertainty”) when he writes:

“Seven mentors helped shape my life. It’s not that I often talked to them about the decisions I made. It means that they were in my head giving me wisdom and perspective. Mentors are those whom we get to know so well that we can predict

their response to situations they have never faced. Blessed are those with multiple godly mentors because they never have to lead alone.”

Allowing others into your life “those whom we get to know so well” is the only way to enjoy the privilege of mentoring and having mentors. Openness and vulnerability are key elements in a mentoring relationship; we give permission to others to help us become what we, by ourselves, will never be.

In “Mentoring Heroes, Mary Doyle suggests that mentoring includes a rich spectrum of helping one-another gifts:

- ✂ empowering others.
- ✂ being a sounding board.
- ✂ supporting a protégé’s growth at their own pace and in their own way.
- ✂ sharing your stories.
- ✂ teaching an eager student what you have learned.
- ✂ creating opportunities for someone to succeed.
- ✂ introducing your protégé to other helpful people.
- ✂ allowing your protégé to accept accolades for work done with your assistance.
- ✂ trusting someone with your wisdom.
- ✂ non-judgmental.
- ✂ recognizing a protégé’s talents and gifts before they do.
- ✂ watching someone exceed your level because of you.
- ✂ challenging your protégé to take that next leap.
- ✂ encouraging a protégé to fly.
- ✂ catching someone before they fall.
- ✂ rewarding.
- ✂ revealing a better, brighter path.
- ✂ sharing your gifts, your time, your knowledge and your wonderful, talented self.

The ministries that make mentors such an invaluable part of our life are many and diverse.

Where would we be without those who have guided and directed us in a variety of settings and circumstances? Helen Lowerie Marshall richly describes mentoring in the following poem:

A Mentor is a People Grower

He has a sort of green thumb
When it comes to handling folks.
He'll listen to their troubles,
He'll chuckle at their jokes.
Somehow they know his interest
Is genuine and true,
And right before your eyes you'll see
Them grow an inch or two.
You'll see their faces blossom out
In smiles of budding cheer.
You know they found a ray of hope
To drive away their fear:
You know he sowed the seeds of faith
And showered them with love,
And made them sense the presence
Of the good Lord above.
He clears out all the weeds of doubt
And fear and hate and greed
And gives them room to breathe. He seems
To sense their every need.
He nurtures them with praises for
The good things that they've done
And trains them to look upward
And stand tall in the sun.
He has a sort of green thumb,
Like a farmer with the sod –
But his work is growing people
In the image of his God.

In your journal, take time to record the names of mentors you have had and what impact they have left on your life. If you are not in a mentoree/mentor relationship, this would be a great goal for this year. Often sharing with others the desire to be mentored is one way God can use to bring a mentor into your life. Your ministry coach or ministry area leaders might be a place to start.

You should also ask the question: "Am I mentoring someone? No matter where you are in your personal and professional development, there are those coming along behind you to whom you can lend a hand. Have you identified them? Have they asked for help? Why don't you ask the Lord to show you who this person(s) might be. Don't be timid, multiplying yourself in others is the most significant and exciting ministry that a missionary could have! The Lord has been gracious to use you, now share with others what you have learned through His directing hand upon your life!