



Mentoring

Although the word “mentor” is not mentioned in the Bible, the concept occurs frequently throughout its pages. In the Old Testament, Moses received advice from his father-in-law that enabled him to delegate responsibility. In the New Testament, Jesus spent much of His earthly ministry mentoring His disciples. He taught them how to pray, instructed them in the way of salvation, and helped them grow spiritually. The apostle Paul was a mentor to many, especially Timothy and Titus. Paul’s letters to them are beautiful examples of mentoring instructions, warnings, and godly advice. A few examples are found in *Titus 2:3-4* and *2 Timothy 2:1-2*:

“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,” (*Titus 2:3-4*)

“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (*2 Timothy 2:1-2*)

What is Mentoring: A simple definition of mentoring is “coming along side and helping someone.” A mentor establishes a relationship with another in order to give wisdom, help, encouragement, support, or guidance. The desired result is that all parties will grow closer to Christ in their daily walk and closer to the fellowship of believers making up the Body of Christ.

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” (*Proverbs 27:17*)

Some of the purposes and goals of mentoring can be:

- Helping others attain spiritual growth.
- Providing support with general issues in life such as singleness, marriage, parenting, etc.
- Giving encouragement during major transitional periods of life.

Mentoring is a Gift of the Spirit: Mentoring is listed as one of the gifts of the Spirit in *Romans 12:8*. The gift of “*exhortation*” is a translation of a Greek word that literally means “coming alongside to help” and implies such activities as admonishing, supporting, and encouraging others. Actually, the role of a mentor is closely related to the mission of the Holy Spirit – comforting, guiding, warning, chastening, instructing, convicting, encouraging, and helping.

In *1 Corinthians 12:28*, Paul mentions a list of various duties that are assigned to members of the Body of Christ. One of those listed is “*helps*” which is a translation of a different Greek word that refers to the act of rendering assistance to the poor, supporting the weak, and ministering to the needy. It is important that members of the Body of Christ be willing to take on that role in the church as given opportunity.

Characteristics of Mentoring Relationships: Mentoring typically occurs between two individuals of the same gender or couples. Mentoring relationships allow for the opportunity to mutually encourage one another and help each other draw closer to Christ in our daily walk and draw closer to the Body of Christ. In order to be a mentor, one must have a desire to relate to others and see them grow. Individuals being mentored need to have respect for the mentor, a desire to grow and learn, and a willingness to be held accountable and challenged.

Healthy mentoring relationships are often focused around three principle concepts:

- Commitment – All relationships take time and energy.
- Clarity – Having clear goals and expectations will give purpose to mentoring.
- Change – Progress should be made toward the desired goals over time.

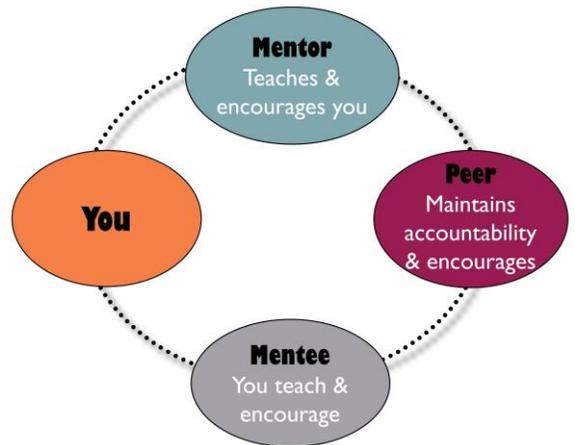
Within the context of these concepts, mentoring can take multiple forms depending on the needs of the one being mentored. A couple of such forms are:

Mentoring as Discipling: In this type of relationship, a more experienced follower of Christ shares wisdom, knowledge, and skills related to growing in one’s walk with Christ. The mentoring relationship impacts both the character and behavior of the one being mentored as the mentor holds them accountable for what is being learned. In discipling, a mentor may help an individual in developing devotional habits for reading the Word and prayer, sharing one’s faith with others, or identifying and developing one’s spiritual gifts.

Mentoring as Coaching: In this type of relationship, someone who knows how to do something very well shares skills/knowledge with one who wants to learn. The coaching mentor first demonstrates the skill and/or imparts knowledge. Then, he or she motivates and helps the individual develop confidence to use the new skills. Next, the learner is given the opportunity to practice the new skills. Finally, feedback and encouragement is provided as the individual practices the new skill/knowledge on his or her own. Some examples of skills/knowledge which can be passed on in a coaching type of mentorship: financial or time management, relationship skills, parenting advice, public speaking skills, etc.

There are three key types of relationships which can encourage us to a deeper walk with the Lord and with each other. Having each of these relationships in our lives can help allow us to more fully appreciate the Body of Christ as God designed it in His Word:

- A Mentor who teaches and encourages you.
- A Peer who encourages and holds you accountable.
- A Mentee who you are investing in to teach and encourage.



Getting Started: While mentoring relationships can take many different forms, the most important factor is a Christ-centered relationship mutually focused on growth and development according to biblical principles. Take some time to pray about the possibility of developing a mentoring relationship as a mentor or mentee. Consider the following steps:

- Pray: Pray specifically and pray believing God will supply all your needs; ask God to prepare your heart so it can be soft and moldable.
- Evaluate and define:

- If seeking a mentor, evaluate and define your needs and desires for a mentoring relationship.
- If seeking to mentor, prayerfully evaluate and define your strengths and gifts you could share with others. Also, be honest about the level of time and commitment you can give to these relationships.
- Seek guidance: Ask a minister or elder for suggestions for an appropriate mentor or express your desire to help as a mentor if needed. Perhaps he knows of someone who would appreciate the opportunity to form a mentoring relationship.
- Connect: Approach a potential mentor with the idea of developing a mentoring relationship. Allow him or her to take time to prayerfully consider the opportunity.
- Pray: Continue covering the process in prayer.

Final Thoughts on Mentoring: So often we can feel alone and isolated in life and doubt anyone cares or notices. This feeling is one of Satan’s clever tactics. When we feel hopeless in our isolation, we tend to not reach out to other people, leaving us feeling even more vulnerable. While turning to others is not always easy and may feel uncomfortable, as we reach out to the Body of Christ, we can gain support and strength to overcome trials.

In addition, we need to be willing to invest in the lives of other individuals as God gives the opportunity. As *Romans 12:5* calls us, we are to be “*members one of another*,” focused on building and encouraging each other to a closer walk in the Lord. May we each be willing to prayerfully consider our role in building up the Body of Christ.

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ACCFS has numerous resources to assist someone who finds themselves serving in a mentoring relationship. These resources and discussion aids can be found on our website. In addition, our Basic Mentor Training presentation gives practical skills regarding helping others. Please visit our website at www.accounseling.org/mentoring to gain access to these and other resources. If you would like more information, please contact Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services at (309)263-5536.