

**Reading Material for PM 525
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Connecting

The Mentoring Relationships You
Need To Succeed In Life

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Chapter Two

UNDERSTANDING MENTORING



Heart Cry of Many: Will You Mentor Me?

Susan is in her mid-fifties. She had experienced a major setback in her earlier years that would continue to affect her for the rest of her life. But God had wonderfully met her in her struggles and turned defeat to victory. Now she wants to turn her experience into a platform for ministry so that she might help others who face the same problem. How can she go about doing that? After attending a workshop on mentoring, Susan asked, "Where can I find someone to whom I can be accountable and who can help me grow at this stage of my life? Do you know someone who could mentor me?"

Richard is in his mid-forties. He senses God's hand on his life. A successful businessman, he is now interested in developing leaders. His dream is to set up a center where young Christian leaders from around the world

can come for short, intensive times of training and be linked up with people and resources for their ongoing development. He has the financial resources and management skills, but he needs to learn more about how to develop others. He read an article on mentoring and realized he himself needs mentoring in order to adequately mentor others. And so he asked, "Will you please mentor me?"

Barry has been a believer for seven years. Successful professionally, he has a good family and has grown steadily in his spiritual life. But Barry, like many others, wonders if he could do more or perhaps do something different. He senses a need to move from success to significance. "Should I change jobs, take on more ministry, or spend more time in prayer and Bible study?" are questions turning in his mind. These are not uncommon questions, but the answer he is looking for is more fundamental and God would be eager to reveal it to him if he would faithfully seek Him for it. "Would you help me do that?" is Barry's request. He needs a mentor.

Mentoring is popular at present.¹ Its popularity attests to its potential usefulness for all kinds of leadership. It also speaks of the tremendous relational vacuum in an individualistic society and its accompanying lack of accountability. In *Habits of the Heart*,² the authors see individualism as an American asset turned into a liability. Americans cling to personal independence when they desperately need

interdependence. But God did not create people to be self-sufficient and move through life alone. To return to healthy relational living will require recognition of this need and courage to change. In no other area is this change so urgently needed than in leadership development. Acknowledgment of this need is partially responsible for the groundswell toward mentoring. "Will you mentor me?" is being expressed in many ways in every area: business, ministry, family, military, education, and the church. This swelling cry for meaningful relationships can be a springboard to learning and growth.

Your world—business, military, academic, Christian organization, or whatever—will strongly influence your definition of mentoring. For instance, business and military mentoring will focus primarily on coaching, sponsoring, and career guidance. The essence of the mentoring process in business and the military lies in the quality and organizational position of the mentor. In those circles a strong mentor is needed.

In the academic environment, students who know subjects well are being asked to tutor other students. The student mentors don't know everything, but they know something and can provide a personal link to knowledge, experience, and the system. This kind of one-on-one and small-group tutoring will vary in quality depending on how well the whole program is supervised.

Our experience with mentoring and our focus on its use center on empowerment—the increased capacity of the mentoree generated by the mentoring relationship and the resources shared.

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

In our survey of leaders, we found that almost all of them identified three to ten people who made significant contributions to their development.³ A study of major biblical figures and the biographies of Christian leaders clearly underscored the conclusion that one of the major influences most often used by God to develop a leader is a person or persons who have something to share that the leader needs. These people who influenced others seemed to have some common characteristics:

- ◆ Ability to readily see potential in a person.
- ◆ Tolerance with mistakes, brashness, abrasiveness, and the like in order to see that potential develop.
- ◆ Flexibility in responding to people and circumstances.
- ◆ Patience, knowing that time and experience are needed for development.
- ◆ Perspective, having vision and ability to see down the road and suggest the next steps that a mentoree needs.
- ◆ Gifts and abilities that build up and encourage others.⁴

Barnabas was a people influencer. He saw potential in Saul (later the Apostle Paul) when others kept their distance. Saul's conversion turned this brilliant

zealot of orthodox Judaism to a fearless Christian evangelist and apologist. Jews and the disciples alike feared him and were afraid to let him join them. "But Barnabas took him [Saul] and brought him to the apostles" (Acts 9:27). Barnabas was not intimidated by this brash convert, but drew him in and vouched for him. Undoubtedly, he encouraged and taught Saul during those early days and patiently stayed with him, knowing that time and experience would soon temper and mature this gifted young leader.

Later, when the gospel spread to Antioch and "a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:21), the apostles sent Barnabas (the Encourager) to the city to verify the phenomenon as genuine. Seeing that the gospel had truly borne fruit and that God's grace was at work, Barnabas knew they would need teaching and growth. So he went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him back to Antioch to help, as he was a powerful teacher and understood the Greek mind and culture. Barnabas (the mentor) knew the kind of developmental environment and challenge that Saul needed in order to grow, and drew him into it. Thank God for Barnabas and the gift he gave to the Church by taking an interest in young Saul! How many Sauls are in the Church today just waiting for a Barnabas?

Barnabas illustrates a number of the specific ways that mentors help mentorees. Our studies identified several important ones:

1. Mentors give to mentorees:
 - ◆ timely advice;

- ◆ letters, articles, books, or other literary information that offers perspective;
 - ◆ finances;
 - ◆ freedom to emerge as a leader even beyond the level of the mentor.
2. Mentors risk their own reputation in order to sponsor a mentoree.
 3. Mentors model various aspects of leadership functions so as to challenge mentorees to move toward them.
 4. Mentors direct mentorees to needed resources that will further develop them.
 5. Mentors co-minister with mentorees in order to increase their confidence, status, and credibility.

An expanded version of our definition focuses more on the empowerment and clarifies the actors in the mentoring drama.

Mentoring is a relational process between mentor, who knows or has experienced something and transfers that something (resources of wisdom, information, experience, confidence, insight, relationships, status, etc.) to a mentoree, at an appropriate time and manner, so that it facilitates development or empowerment.

A breakthrough in understanding and therefore making this definition a personal reality comes when you see mentoring as a relational exchange between two people with varying levels of involvement and

degrees of intensity. We found it helpful to understand not only the various levels of involvement, but also the kinds of involvement with different mentoring types or functions. This chart (figure 2-1) shows the three groupings of mentors and places them on a continuum ranging from more deliberate (with more depth and awareness of effort) to less deliberate involvement.

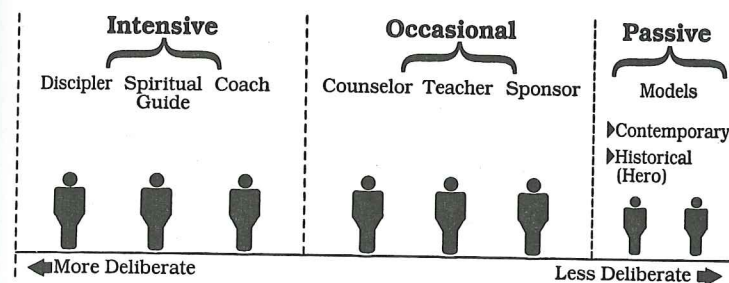


Figure 2-1.
Mentoring Groups and Functions Along a Continuum

Apart from this kind of conceptual breakthrough, a problem exists. *There aren't enough ideal mentors who can do it all.* But lots of people can fulfill one or more of the mentoring functions. All you need to do is identify the specific area of mentoring you need, and that should enable you to answer the question, "Who can mentor me?" Later, we will discuss in more detail each of the mentoring types and functions given on the continuum. For now, to help you with the overall picture, we'll list the central thrust of each type.

Table 2-1. Major Thrusts of Mentoring Types

MENTORING TYPE/FUNCTIONS	CENTRAL THRUST OF EMPOWERMENT
Intensive	
1. Discippler	Enablement in basics of following Christ.
2. Spiritual Guide	Accountability, direction, and insight for questions, commitments, and decisions affecting spirituality and maturity.
3. Coach	Motivation, skills, and application needed to meet a task, challenge.
Occasional	
4. Counselor	Timely advice and correct perspectives on viewing self, others, circumstances, and ministry.
5. Teacher	Knowledge and understanding of a particular subject.
6. Sponsor	Career guidance and protection as leader moves within an organization.
Passive	
7. Model	
<i>Contemporary</i>	A living, personal model for life, ministry, or profession who is not only an example but also inspires emulation.
<i>Historical</i>	A past life that teaches dynamic principles and values for life, ministry, and/or profession.

You may be seeking an ideal mentor who can fulfill the whole range of mentoring functions. You will rarely find one. But if you narrow your mentoring needs to a specific area, you will usually find someone available to mentor you in relation to that need.

Mentoring is an empowering experience that requires a connection between two people . . . the mentor and the mentoree. Factors such as time, proximity, needs, shared values, and goals affect any relationship. But the mentoring relationship

needs three additional factors, or dynamics, to bring about empowerment. These dynamics are constantly at play in the context of a mentoring relationship and directly affect the mentoree's progress, change, and level of empowerment.

The following dynamics are vital to the mentoring relationship:

1. *Attraction*—This is the necessary starting point in the mentoring relationship. The mentoree is drawn to the mentor for various reasons: perspective, certain skills, experience, values and commitments modeled, perceived wisdom, position, character, knowledge, and influence. The mentor is attracted to the mentoree's attitude, potential, and opportunity for influence. As attraction increases, trust, confidence, and mentoring subjects develop that will strengthen the mentoring relationship and ensure empowerment.
2. *Responsiveness*—The mentoree must be willing and ready to learn from the mentor. Attitude is crucial for the mentoree. A responsive, receiving spirit on the part of the mentoree and attentiveness on the part of the mentor directly speed up and enhance the empowerment.
3. *Accountability*—Mutual responsibility for one another in the mentoring process ensures progress and closure. Sharing expectations and a periodic review and evaluation will give strength to application and facilitate

empowerment. The mentor should take responsibility for initiating and maintaining accountability with the mentoree.

The more deliberate and intense the mentoring relationship, the more important these dynamics are. Why is this true? Because mutual commitment is necessary for change and growth to take place. These dynamics are the ingredients that produce this commitment.

Think back on the various interactions you have had with knowledgeable and experienced people. A discussion may have centered around a personal need you had, but because there was no mutual commitment you might not have felt safe to fully disclose your situation. Further, the other party to the conversation would not have felt committed to orient his or her response to understand and support your need to the degree that would have specifically helped you. Follow-up on what you discussed would not have taken place, for without commitment the subject is dropped. When commitment is part of a mentoring relationship there is safety, focus, sincerity, and follow-through until growth takes place. We find this to be vital to the Intensive types of mentoring where change and progressive development are the goals.

Occasional and Passive mentoring are not as intense or deliberate. These mentoring roles, for instance, do not necessarily need the dynamics of *accountability* to be effective, whereas the Intensive roles do. *Attraction* and *responsiveness* must be present in all types of mentoring or there will be no empowerment.

Looking at the continuum in figure 2-1, you can visualize a flow of these dynamics (attraction, responsiveness, accountability). On the left end where contact is more frequent, the involvement is more deliberate and intense mutual commitment is strong. But as you move to the right, accountability falls away and attractiveness and responsiveness are more a function of the mentoree's immediate need. We will develop and illustrate this later.

Mentoring is always available if you specify your empowerment need and if you are willing to supply the needed dynamics. Some may not agree with this. Our experience leads us to conclude that many historical models are available to meet a broad range of mentoring needs—that is, if you are willing to search through bookshelves to find them and supply the needed dynamics to bring about empowerment. (We listed a few models in the annotated bibliography to illustrate what is available.) When seeking a mentor, don't look for an ideal person who can do the whole range of mentoring functions. Few of these exist, if any. But if the mentoring needs are specified, someone is usually available who can mentor to that need. We believe that mentors are part of God's development plan for each of His followers. He will provide them as you "ask and seek."

SUMMARY

Mentoring is not just the latest fad or buzzword. For Christians it is rooted in biblical principles. Its current popularity stems from a need arising from Western society's extreme individualism and resulting lack of accountability.

By looking more deeply at the characteristics of the various types of mentoring, you will be more aware of people who could be potential mentors for you in specific areas and at certain times in your life.

It takes commitment to build a mentoring relationship, to allow our lives to be teachable and responsive, and to be willing to be held accountable for our growth. But the resulting empowerment and enrichment to our lives are beyond measure.

FOR FURTHER STUDY (CHAPTERS 1 AND 2)

1. Identify some people who have been important in your own personal development. Using table 2-1, try to identify which mentoring function they fulfilled for you. Can you think of an example of all seven types in your life?
2. List some areas of need you see in your life that a mentor might meet. Be as specific as you can.
3. Structured accountability decreases as you move toward the less deliberate types of mentoring. How would you include the accountability dynamic with a historical hero as your mentor?
4. Do a further study of the life of Barnabas (Acts 4:36 and chapters 11–15), looking for those qualities in his life that made him such a good mentor to those around him.
5. What are the advantages of seeking multiple mentors for your life rather than one all-encompassing “guru”?

Chapter Three

INTENSIVE MENTORING: THE DISCIPLER



Three types comprise the Intensive mentoring group: Discipler, Spiritual Guide, and Coach. They each call for more deliberate and specific interaction and work best when all three dynamics are fully present.

In this group, each dynamic can be more easily analyzed for its degree of presence and effectiveness. In the next three chapters we will examine each of them in detail, beginning here with the Discipler.

THE DISCIPLER

The Discipler is the mentoring type with which the majority of us are probably most familiar. A wealth of books and practical aids on the subject of discipling others has been published over the last two decades. What comes to mind is an individual who helps a new believer grow in the basics of a disciple's life . . . showing him how to pray, study the Bible, and share his faith with others.