

*"Ask me not where I live and what I like to eat.
Ask me what I am living for and what I think is
keeping me from living fully for that."*

THOMAS MERTON

MENTORING

Desire	to accompany and encourage others to grow to their God-given potential
Definition	Mentoring is a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing his or her life, experience and God-given resources. A mentor nurtures an apprentice's personal development, faith and skill.
Scripture	<p>"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him." (Acts 9:27)</p> <p>"Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience." (1 Timothy 1:18)</p> <p>"Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live. . . . Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure." (Titus 2:3-5)</p>
Practice Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guidance, encouragement and modeling given by a more mature believer to a younger one • training that equips another to better use their gifts • building authentic relationships that provide support, encouragement and help in specific areas. • providing or receiving influence, instruction, training and perspective
God-Given Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning from example • practicing teachability and humility • building others up in Christ • opening my calling, vocation, gifting and limits to a mentor's wise attention • garnering the wisdom of those who have walked with God for many years • developing and encouraging new leaders and disciples • seeing others grow and change

MENTORING

WE DON'T AUTOMATICALLY change our ideas, attitudes and behavioral patterns just because we learn something new that is good for us. Most of us need more help in transformation than that. We need examples, relationships, hands-on experience, support and empowering. We need mentors. In Christian theology the Holy Spirit is the mentoring nuclear reactor of transformation. And one of the tools in his hand is the body of Christ. Barnabas is a wonderful example of a believer who risked mentoring a wildcard named Paul. Barnabas's investment in Paul reached farther than either of them could have imagined. Paul's teaching and life helped shape the early church, and his letters became part of Scripture.

Throughout church history people have been shaped and guided by mentors and teachers. Gregory (AD 213–270) wrote of his teacher Origen:

He stimulated us by the acts he performed more than by the theories he taught. . . . Less obvious, but more important . . . was the fellowship with this man. Where I was blind he guided me. He taught me the truth concerning the Word. It was like a spark dropping into my inmost soul and catching fire there. (Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*)

Godly mentors help people grow. They believe in others. They recognize raw potential and willingness to be taught. Mentors often see more in the mentee's gifts than the mentee does. A mentor's confidence and equipping skills can motivate a mentee to try new things and take risks he or she would never try alone. Mentors are not competitive; they eagerly empower others—even if it means empowering them into their own position. Mentors believe that by giving away their gifts, time, treasure, teaching and power they can influence and shape others for the sake of the kingdom.

Mentoring does not need to be simply a professional and structured enterprise. Parents can mentor their children in skills and behaviors. Teachers can mentor their students. Students and friends can mentor one another when they have a skill someone wants. More mature married couples can mentor younger married couples, and older parents can mentor younger parents. Mentoring is passing on what you have. It does not require you to be responsible for more than you know.

Few of us remember who won the last five Heisman trophies. We don't remember who

wins the Nobel or Pulitzer prizes each year. But we all remember those mentors who believed in us and equipped us to become more than we ever could have been on our own.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the kind of person you want to be at age thirty, at fifty, at eighty.
2. Who do you know now that is an example of where you want to head?
3. What are you doing now to become the person you long to be?
4. How has the presence of someone in your life enabled you to do something you could never have done on your own?
5. Is there something you wanted to do and no one ever believed you could? How did that affect you?
6. How does being competitive affect your ability to mentor others?
7. When have you empowered another person to succeed, grow or develop?
What was that like for you? For the other person?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Take a mentor review. Think back over your life, writing down the names of those who have believed in you and mentored you. What happened to you because of their presence in your life? Write them a letter telling them what they mean to you.
2. “Pay it forward.” Think over your job and the colleagues you work with. Who needs someone to believe in them and mentor them? Ask the Lord if he intends for you to mentor this person. Offer to be a mentor for the next year.
3. Ask God to give you his heart for others and their transformation. Then pay attention to the mentoring nudge the Holy Spirit gives. Take the initiative to help someone grow.
4. Where do you feel stuck spiritually? Who could help you? Ask for help!
5. If you are an older married couple, take on a newly married couple and share your lives with them. • If you are young at heart, find some young people to share your heart with. • If you are gifted at hospitality, tutor someone who isn’t. • If you are gifted in prayer, become a prayer partner of a young person. • Pass on the gift of you to another. (Remember, you don’t have to offer something spiritual—just offer who you are and what you know.)
6. What keeps you from mentoring another? • Talk to God about your hesitations. What is he calling you to do?

RESOURCES ON MENTORING

A Resilient Life by Gordon MacDonald

Finding a Spiritual Friend by Timothy Jones