



Empowering through the Relational Process of Mentorship



Ecologists remind us that a tree planted in a clearing of an old forest will grow more successfully than when it is planted in isolation in an open field. The roots of the new planting will follow more easily and more deeply the hidden pathways of old root systems. Likewise, human beings thrive best in following the paths of life already taken by others before them.

None of us needs to reinvent the wheel or live as if no one has preceded us in the pathways of the wise.

—James M. Houston, *The Mentored Life*



WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a transformational relationship in which a person is equipped, empowered, and encouraged through the sharing of resources (time, wisdom, experience, information, insight, etc.) at an appropriate time and manner.

Like all relationships, mentoring relationships come in different forms, functions, and durations. Throughout our lives the Holy Spirit will invite us into various mentoring relationships, as both mentor and mentee.

WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF MENTORING INVOLVE?

Mentoring flows through our relationship with Christ and one another.

The Christian Faith is an imitative faith. We follow Christ and invite others to follow along with us. Jesus reaches out to us by his Spirit, sharing his life with us. And the Spirit calls us to be with people in a way that honors God's purposes and our well-being.

In *Deep Mentoring*, Bobby Clinton shares five dynamics that take place in the mentoring process as the relationship progresses.





THE FIVE DYNAMICS:



Dynamic 1: Attraction and Initiation (The Art of Beginning Well)

Relationships invariably will begin because someone sees something in the life of another that causes him or her to desire a more intentional meeting together. Perhaps it is the person's character or wisdom or shared experiences that can draw us to one another. This dynamic of attraction can start with either one or both parties. Pay attention to the connections you form with the people around you. The Spirit may be prompting to invest in their formation.



Dynamic 2: Relationship (Developing Trust and Intimacy)

An important part of mentoring is cultivating trust and intimacy. Fellowship and genuine friendship go a long way to create this safe space. Trust is not simply built by following a clear set of steps, but there are things we can do. In particular, the practices of listening, asking questions, and prayerfulness serve to foster this trust and intimacy in a relationship that is concerned with helping one another "grow up in every way...into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).



Dynamic 3: Responsiveness (A Spirit of Teachability)

No amount of talent or insight can overcome a mentee's unwillingness to learn. In GCI, we use the acronym FATE as a discernment tool for investing in mentoring relationships. FATE stands for Faithful, Available, Teachable, and Enthusiastic. We cannot aspire for others. Considering these factors and having honest conversations with one another are important to the mentoring process.



Dynamic 4: Accountability (Exercises of Grace)

The spiritual mentoring relationship flourishes long-term in a climate of support and challenge. Typically, a supportive and trusting environment must precede the sort of growth challenges that will emerge in the relationship. Our capacity to challenge one another graciously to greater faithfulness will depend on our ability to build a trusting and safe climate. In contrast, there are some relationships that stall due to their inability to offer challenge. The presence of both healthy support and challenge are critical for growth to occur.



Dynamic 5: Empowerment (The Goal of Mentoring)

Intentionality is a characteristic of all types of mentoring relationships. There are certainly meeting times that will seem wandering, inefficient, or unfocused; but often these times are spent cultivating context and building trust amid the ordinary, everyday details of life. The mentor, though, always must keep in mind the purpose of the relationship.

MENTORING EXAMPLES:

What are some forms of mentoring?

Here are some example forms of mentoring to help as you discern how God may be inviting you to participate in mentoring relationships in this season of life:

- 1. Spiritual mentoring:** Spiritual mentoring is one way we can participate in Christ's disciple-making ministry as followers of Jesus who are called to be disciple-making disciples.

Randy D. Reese and Robert Loane provide a robust definition of spiritual mentoring in *Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey*:

“relationship between two or more people and the Holy Spirit, where the people can discover, through the already present action of God, three things: (1) Intimacy with God (Who is God?), (2) identity as beloved children of God (Who am I?), and (3) a unique voice for kingdom responsibility (What am I to do with my life?)”

In this light, spiritual mentoring is the foundation of all mentoring in the life of the church.

- 2. Ongoing Mentoring vs. Occasional Mentoring:**

- Ongoing mentoring is consistent mentoring that happens over an extended period, sometimes years or even lifetimes.
- Occasional mentoring is temporary mentoring that happens for a brief period, often with a specific purpose or focus.

- 3. Formal Mentoring vs. Informal Mentoring:**

- Formal Mentoring:** Formal mentoring relationships are intentionally established through programs or when a mentor/mentee explicitly approaches someone to be their mentor/mentee. Mentoring relationships can also be formalized through stating specific goals, rhythms, agreements, or expectations.
- Informal Mentoring:** Informal mentoring relationships grow organically without the aid of programs, formal requests, or written agreements.

- 4. Sponsor Mentor:** a sponsor mentor is a mentor who uses their resources (knowledge, network, influence, etc.) to help a person make strategic connections that open new doors of possibility. Sponsor mentorship is typically a form of occasional mentoring.

- 5. Reverse-mentoring:** Reverse mentoring occurs when the person traditionally considered the ‘mentee’ in a mentor/mentee relationship becomes a mentor to the person traditionally considered ‘mentor’. Many mentoring relationships flow between traditional and reverse mentoring throughout the mentoring relationship.

- 6. Group Mentoring:** Group mentoring takes place when a small group of people are being mentored together.

- 7. Peer Mentoring:** Peer mentoring takes place between persons of similar age or experience, departing from the traditional model of a seasoned mentor and inexperienced mentee.



Much of Jesus' earthly ministry was noticing people along the way and inviting them to come and see. Much of mentoring is a ministry of paying attention to God's active work in and calling for those who he has placed around us. There is no pressure for us to enlist people but an invitation to come alongside and invest in others. In this communal process, we are all transformed and conformed more into the image of Christ.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

-Colossians 2:6-7

Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey
Randy D. Reese, Robert Loane, James M. Houston (Foreword)