

Orientation Guide: Mentor



Contents	PAGE
Leader's Guide	2
Understanding the Role	
THE ROLE OF A MENTOR	
<i>by Earl Palmer</i>	3
ADVICE FROM AN EXPERIENCED LEADER	
<i>interview with Doug Stewart</i>	5
SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION	7
Embracing the Skills	
THREE KINDS OF MENTORING	
<i>by Fred Smith Sr.</i>	8
QUALITIES OF A GOOD MENTOR	
<i>by Fred Smith Sr.</i>	10
TRAITS OF A GOOD MENTEE	
<i>by Fred Smith Sr.</i>	12
BEGINNING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP	
<i>by Earl Palmer</i>	14
CHECKLIST FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	
<i>by Life Together</i>	16
SIGNS OF FRUITFUL MENTORING	
<i>by Fred Smith Sr.</i>	17
PRAYER LIST	18
Resources	
FURTHER EXPLORATION	19



Leader's Guide

How to use "Orientation Guides" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS.

Welcome to *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training*. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. The material selected by the editors of *Christianity Today International* comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

"Orientation Guides" are easy-to-use tools that help prepare people to take on new roles in church leadership. Each guide focuses on a particular role in church ministry and comprises several brief, practical handouts on that role. The handouts first present an overview of the ministry and of the leadership role, including an interview with a successful practitioner (pp. 5–6). The second section provides focused, practical information to help you perform your duties.

This specific guide is designed to help provide basic training to men and women who are stepping up to mentor others. Simply print the handouts you need and use them as necessary.

For example, examine the sample job description (p. 7) as a starting point for defining the mentor's responsibilities. To learn what it takes to be a great mentor, see "Qualities of a Good Mentor" (pp. 10–11). For suggestions on identifying a potential protégé, see "Traits of a Good Mentee" (pp. 12–13) and "Beginning the Mentoring Relationship" (pp. 14–15). For short assessments that help you keep on track, see "Checklist for Relationship Building" (p. 16) and "Signs of Fruitful Mentoring" (p. 17).

We hope mentors old and young benefit from this guide as they seek to care for and build up their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

To contact the editors:

E-mail BCL@christianitytoday.com

Mail BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS, Christianity Today International
465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188



The Role of a Mentor

Understanding what a mentor is and does.

2 Timothy 2:2

Over the years, I've reflected a lot on how others have mentored me, and I have done my share of mentoring as well. Here are some things I've learned.

Discovering the Truth

Some Christians never gain confidence in their own thoughts, because they rely too heavily on some dynamic leader. They're conditioned to feel they always need a strong teacher to clarify decisions for them. No one has helped them become confident enough to stand on their own. They need the kind of teacher who lives out the Hebrew word for teacher: *morah*. It comes from the same root as *torah*, "the way." A *morah* teaches by pointing out the way. That's what a mentor does: walk with the student part of the way, then stop and point out the rest of the journey.

Learning from the Student

As a mentor, I want to learn from the person I'm mentoring. When that happens, I know the person is really developing his or her own thoughts.

To learn from the person I'm mentoring, I have to do at least three things:

1. *Stop teaching.* When I'm mentoring someone, I have to be cautious about dispensing information about the Bible and theology. As a pastor, it's easy for me to slip into telling people what I've learned from a recent journal article or Bible commentary, especially after they've asked me a question about which I know something. Although it's sometimes appropriate to give people a straight answer, most of the time the mentor's role is to help people find the answers to their questions themselves.
2. *Listen.* I had just finished my first year in seminary when I spent a summer with Bob Munger, then pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Berkeley, California. At that point, my conversations were somewhat sophomoric. Yet Bob encouraged me to voice my own thoughts. He helped me develop by communicating that he respected me and that he was interested in my thoughts.
3. *Encourage disagreement.* The most effective mentors are those who are comfortable with a lively interaction with their students. It is when I am flexible enough to permit someone the freedom to negotiate with what I say that I mentor best. Most important, encouraging interaction is a matter of not acting defensive when people disagree. Instead I must listen carefully to the reply and try to learn from it. In this way, the people I mentor gain confidence in their own ability to discover and understand God's Word to them. They see that they have something significant to offer.

Discerning God's Will

I don't want to tell people what God's will is for them; I want them to discover it for themselves. That happens best, I've noticed, when I affirm what's going right with a person.

1. *Express encouragement regularly.* Encouragement gives people confidence to work through their own thoughts and draw their own conclusions.
2. *Don't qualify affirmation.* I meet many people who are discouraged because what personal encouragement they have received has been qualified: "Yes, that's true enough. But you forgot about this." "You did that well, but you also need to improve in this area." I look for ways to give simple, direct affirmations without the "buts." I'll say, "You're doing some very good thinking about this." Period. I simply affirm people for what they're doing right. Since the people I mentor are serious about their walk with Christ, I know in most cases they'll eventually figure out where they fall short. In the meantime, I'm giving them confidence that, when they do see a shortfall, they'll be able to do something about it.

3. *Build trust.* An important aspect of mentoring is attending to the slow business of building trust. And that involves listening with interest to what the person shares with me and affirming the good in what they say and do. Gradually, the person I'm mentoring will share deeper thoughts and talk about their more exciting dreams. That's when my encouragement will really count.

4. *Confront only when you've earned the right.* As is true in any meaningful relationship, there comes a time when the mentor must confront the person being mentored. For instance, I've been working with a young man for whom I have a great deal of respect. But there is one area of his life in which he has been unrealistic: he has not been responsible in the financial support of his marriage. His wife was supporting him and the family, but the bills kept piling up. I had been encouraging him for months, trying to discern the direction God is calling. But if I said nothing about this problem, I would have enabled his destructive patterns. So I had to help him see he needed to get a job—pump gas or wait tables or sweep floors, anything. I couldn't have done that at the beginning of our relationship. And I can't do that in every mentoring relationship; sufficient trust has not been established. But I've earned the right to tell this young man what I think he ought to do.

A mentor, then, offers encouragement, and sometimes direction, so that the person mentored can move ahead on his own with confidence. The goal in Christian mentoring is to help people discern and follow the will of God on their own.

—EARL PALMER; adapted from [Mastering Teaching](#), © 1991 by Christianity Today International and published by Thomas Nelson.



Advice from an Experienced Leader

One mentor shares his thoughts on establishing effective mentoring relationships.

Psalm 119:130

Doug Stewart has worked for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for 50 years. He and his wife, Marilyn (who has been with InterVarsity for more than 45 years), are both Specialists in Pastoral Care and Spiritual Formation. Doug currently mentors 10 men on a consistent basis and looks for other opportunities wherever he goes. Tyler Charles spoke with him about his experiences and his approach to mentoring.

Tell me a little bit about your experiences as a mentor.

When I was first invited to speak on mentoring to a local group, I thought, “I’m not a mentor.” I thought of a mentor as an expert in a certain field. But then I thought about it and realized, “I’ve been a mentor all my life.” Mentoring has been an essential approach to ministry that I’ve followed. So I realized that mentoring has been what I’ve done at every stage.

What does a typical mentoring relationship look like for you?

I don’t try to become a friend, a buddy, or a peer—neither do I try to hide behind some expertise. But I do realize, in this particular relationship, that they’re seeking something from me, and it’s not about me wanting something from them. It’s not a reciprocal thing. I’m not saying I don’t benefit from the relationship, but I have to realize I’m there for them.

What is the goal of mentoring?

The goal is the empowerment, the encouragement, and the strengthening of another person to take steps forward from where they are. Whether it’s in ministry, in their personal life, with God, or in their family, it’s about getting from wherever they are to whatever is set before them.

Often people seek out mentors when they want to move on in some way, but they don’t know how to do it, or they don’t feel capable of doing it.

Does mentoring come naturally for you, or is it a conscious effort?

As I look over my life, and the ways God has used me, I probably have a gift of mentoring. And it’s one I think I should develop. So that means taking initiative—not to push myself on somebody, but to at least offer an opportunity. It’s a skill—a posture—that I’ve cultivated, and it now comes more naturally to me. This is what I do best. I come alongside people and try to empower them in whatever way they need to take the next step in life.

How do you approach the initial meeting?

I want to put the person at ease first. They are always a little apprehensive and nervous; they’re wondering how I’m going to respond. Am I safe? Can they trust me? So I ask them general information—questions that will help them feel I’ve gotten to know them a little bit.

Then I’ll ask them what they are wanting from me. How do they feel I’ll be able to help them? Since I usually meet with a person as a spiritual director, I usually ask them what their journey with God has been like thus far.

I try to laugh, joke a little bit. I want to put them at ease. Then get them to tell me what they’re looking for. I don’t try to cover much more the first time than establishing a confidence and sense of security.

How long does it take for the relationship to go deep?

In some cases, I’ve seen depth immediately. One man started sobbing the first time we met. I was shocked at such vulnerability. But I would say it usually takes at least two hour-long meetings. After a couple of meetings, I feel a connection to the person, and I think they feel more relaxed with me.

Is it important for men to mentor men and women to mentor women?

Generally men mentor men and women mentor women, but by no means would I say exclusively. My wife meets with several men; she's their spiritual director/mentor, and I know they get quite a bit from her. Given the fact that there will be an age difference—we're not talking about peer relationships or friendships—I think men can mentor women and women can mentor men. It may not be quite as common, but I think it can work very well.

Is mentoring a rewarding experience for you?

Apart from loving my wife, kids, and grandchildren, it's the most rewarding thing I do. It's extremely rewarding to connect with people's lives, to encourage them, to open new perspectives. I hope to do it as long as I can.

It's something very appropriate for people in my stage of life. A man was telling me how wonderful it was to have a "grandfather" in his life to affirm and bless him, and I said, "You don't know how wonderful it is to have a young person learn something from my experiences." It's redeeming. We learn a lot more from pain than successes, and I think [mentoring] is great for people as they get older.

What advice would you offer to new mentors?

A mentor needs to take initiative to ask some questions. I don't find that others can always explain or want to explain what they're facing, so their needs may not be apparent at first. Also, I try to communicate worth, appreciation, and value.

What else should other mentors know?

To me, it's equally important that I have someone that I go to. It changes the way I do mentoring, because it keeps me humble and helps me realize how to be helpful to another person. I think that we *all* ought to seek somebody with whom we can have a little more intentionality and talk about what's on our heart. It's very hard for men to do this; it's hard for them to take that first step. Probably that's why I take more initiative than might be normal. I like to build a bridge there in case the other man wants to cross it.

If you could give just one piece of advice, what would it be?

Believe that God has given you something that you can pass on and share with another, and be willing to do so when the opportunity arises.

—TYLER CHARLES; © 2009 by Christianity Today International/BuildingChurchLeaders.com.



Sample Job Description

Community Church of the Word

123 Main Street
Somewhere, State, Zip
Phone: (123) 456-7890
www.churchid.org

The Rev. John Smith, Pastor
The Rev. James Jones, Assistant
Mr. Michael Grant, Music Director
info@churchid.org

POSITION:

Mentor

JOB SUMMARY:

The mentor identifies potential protégés within the congregation whom he or she can teach, guide, and encourage on their spiritual journey. He or she must be committed to growing in his or her own faith and also demonstrate a servant's heart and a concern for sharing wisdom.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Roles and responsibilities are delegated by the senior pastor.

EXPECTATIONS:

The mentor serves a vital function in the life of Community Church, by taking time to help encourage students and others in their faith. As with other church leaders, the mentor must commit to the highest standards of Christian living, as well as to the Community Church guidelines for adults serving in ministry to children and minors (if the mentor is working with young people). Background checks are mandatory.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:

- Attend church functions to meet potential protégés.
- Take initiative to begin mentoring relationships with interested protégés.
- Be available for regular mentoring meetings.
- Help protégés identify their goals and work with them to develop a plan to achieve them.
- As you are able, attend important events in the lives of your protégés (performances, competitions, and other ceremonies).
- Be willing to meet with and train others interested in mentoring.
- If not presently in one, enter into an accountability relationship with another member of Community Church.



Three Kinds of Mentoring

Different types of relationships require different kinds of skills.

Colossians 3:23–24

Mentoring is back in favor again, like a wonderful old story that hasn't been told for so long it sounds new. Mentoring is an updated version of one of the oldest and best methods of learning. In times before academic degrees were mandatory for many careers, mentoring was the accepted system for training people for everything from manual skills to professions, such as medicine and law. Today there are several types of mentoring. I will discuss three: role model, lifestyle, and skills-art mentoring.

Role model

Role models personify whom we would like to become. My wife, Mary Alice, had three women in her life who laid out the path she wanted to walk. The first was her high school teacher, Miss Brown, who was stately, dignified—totally ladylike. Mary Alice saw in her what she felt a southern lady should be. Even today Mary Alice will refer to her as the perfect lady.

Next was her Bible teacher, Mrs. Keen, who taught a group of young mothers to understand the Scripture. Her cup overflowed with love and grace from the Lord. Mary Alice would say of her, “She is what a Christian should be.”

Then there was Miss Gordon—a tiny, immaculate, white-haired woman in her eighties. She was raised in culture and wealth but spent a great deal of her time reaching prisoners. She personified the quiet power of victory. When she passed away, it was a short step from here to heaven.

Mary Alice found in these three women role models who mentored her adult life and vectored her lifestyle. They influenced her not by what they had but by who they were.

Observation and identification are the important elements in role-model mentoring. Often the role model is not conscious of his or her effect on another person. Sometimes there is little personal contact between the two. For example, a role model might be a character from the Bible. Some say, “I’m like Peter,” or “I resonate with Paul.” In other words, role-model mentoring is largely unintentional on the mentor’s part.

Lifestyle mentoring

Another form of mentoring defines the principles of living. I recently heard a young man say, “My grandfather was everything to me. He loved me, and he taught me how to live.” What a blessing.

As we look at Scripture for lifestyle mentoring, we immediately think of the relationship between Paul and Timothy. We don't know how much technical skill as a missionary Paul gave Timothy, but we do know Paul was an excellent sponsor. We know he was a father in the faith. He let Timothy observe him at work. Paul promoted him to the churches. In the broad sense, we could call Paul a lifestyle mentor to Timothy.

This type of mentoring is a kind of parenting without the typical parental responsibilities. The real responsibility falls on the young person to absorb and to observe correctly.

The responsibility of the lifestyle mentor is to be open and real and to consistently personify who he is so that the young person receives a clear signal. The mentor must provide a comfortable atmosphere in which the student feels free to ask any question he or she needs answered.

A good mentor never ridicules a question. He may choose not to answer it, but he is careful never to ridicule, for questions are the pump that makes the answers flow.

Skills-art mentoring

Skills-art mentoring is a one-on-one relation between a mentor and mentee for the specific and definable development of a skill or an art.

One of my favorite mentoring stories is of the young pianist who came to Leonard Bernstein and asked to be mentored by him. Bernstein said, “Tell me what you want to do, and I will tell you whether or not you're doing it.” Bernstein had a deep understanding of mentoring. The young man initiated the contact, he had a specific request, and he made the request of an authority. Bernstein essentially said to the young man, “You're responsible for your playing and your practice. The one thing you can't do is hear yourself as a great pianist hears you. That I can do and will do for you.”

In a church, skills-art mentoring might be used to prepare a young person for a particular ministry either inside or outside the church.

Effective mentoring has no set formula. It's a living relationship and progresses in fits and starts. Even so, identifying which type of mentoring someone expects from you is the beginning of success.

— FRED SMITH SR.; adapted from *[The Pastor's Soul, Vol. 5: Leading with Integrity](#)*, © 1999 by the author or Christianity Today International and published by Bethany House.



Qualities of a Good Mentor

A good mentor should develop these characteristics.

Proverbs 1:2–4

The mentor should be knowledgeable in the subject and objective of his criticism.

The mentor who says what the other wants to hear is irresponsible. He should not counsel in matters in which he is not expert or pass judgment in subjects beyond his limitation. Even so, it is important that the mentor on occasion say, “I don't know. I've had no experience with that.” It is good when he has a broad network of knowledgeable friends who might be helpful on such an occasion.

The mentor needs the experience and originality to develop options rather than decisions.

Some individuals with whom I work initially become frustrated that I will not give them advice but, rather, options from which they can choose. The mentor must never take over the decision-making responsibility for the individual. A good mentor is not a quick-fix artist.

The mentor must genuinely believe in the potential of the mentee.

A mentor cannot do serious thinking about the needs of the learner or spend the necessary time without believing in that person's potential. A mentor isn't doing what he's doing to be nice. There may be times when the learner loses confidence in himself, particularly after a failure, and will need the mentor to restore his confidence.

I had breakfast with a young executive in Dallas, and I asked him to tell me his story. He said, “Until early in my twenties I amounted to nothing. I think that was due to the fact I was raised in a family that believed it was wrong to say anything good about anyone that might stir up their pride. I felt there was nothing special about me until my Sunday school teacher put his arm around my shoulders and said, ‘I believe in you.’” Gradually this young man began to believe in himself. From that time, he started to climb the executive ladder.

A good mentor helps define the vision, the goal, and the plan.

So many young people I talk to have several options for their life, and they are not equipped to choose the right one. They hesitate at the thought of giving up the others. Choosing a specific goal is the key to doing many other activities. The goal defines the discipline, creates the energy, and gives the measure of progress. I try to find whether the individual's goal is formed by outside influences or internal ones—to please or impress others or to satisfy himself? The image of success has become so prevalent in our society that I want to know what gives him his deepest satisfaction.

Sometimes a person will say, “I know where I want to go, but I don't know how to get there.” I have found it much easier to work out the map once I know the destination. Be sure the plan is as simple as it can be. Elaborate plans seldom get carried out. Too often, complicated plans are a subconscious attempt to avoid doing.

The chemistry must be good.

The first evidence of this is clear communication. Each must clearly and easily understand the other. Before I start to work with someone, I will check this by talking a few minutes and then asking the person to repeat what I've said. Sometimes I'm amazed at what I hear. It's difficult to work well together unless each communicates well with the other.

Intuition, a feeling of the spirit of each other, is also important. When our spirits are in harmony, then we can work until our communications are clear. We won't jump to conclusions or get carried off into prejudices. I find this particularly true in working between races.

Communication, to me, is understanding, not agreement. I hear people say that the problem is a lack of communication when it may be genuine difference of opinion. No amount of communication will change that.

The mentor must be able to commit to a person and to a situation.

When we commit to be a mentor, we commit to walking with the person all the way through his or her journey. That will take time and thinking. I must be willing to take a phone call any time it comes from a mentee in distress.

The mentor must be given permission to hold the mentee accountable.

The mentee must give this responsibility to the mentor. This helps keep the mentee from becoming resentful or quietly rebellious or hostile.

I tell one of my mentees that accountability is like a tail on the kite—it keeps things from darting around. Accountability is not control. In mentoring, it is pointing out objectively what is happening and asking if that is what the mentee wants. At no time should the mentor take over control of the other's life. The mentor is a counselor, not a boss.

— FRED SMITH SR.; adapted from [*The Pastor's Soul, Vol. 5: Leading with Integrity*](#), © 1999 by the author or Christianity Today International and published by Bethany House.



Traits of a Good Mentee

Look for these five traits in the people you mentor.

Proverbs 19:27

Look for these traits in a potential or new mentee.

1. *The mentee must be honest with himself.*

To me, two of the most important words in life are “current reality.” That means being committed to things as they are, not as we wish they were. We may want them to be different and be willing to work to make them different, but for the present we have to deal with things as they are. The mentee must own the situation before he can correct it or develop it.

I applaud the individual who is handicapped in some way (mentally, socially, physically) but has accepted it as a challenge and no longer sees himself as a victim but as a victor. It’s easy to work a little harder and a little longer with people who think that way. An executive I’ve admired for years had an eye put out when he was a small boy. When he entered an Ivy League school, he checked the records and found that no one had ever made straight A’s and four letters in athletics. He did it, with one eye. He later became vice president of a major corporation. He was a winner, not a victim.

2. *A mentee must be a good student.*

A truly good student enjoys the growth process as well as the reward. When I became intrigued with golf, I thoroughly enjoyed the practice and the study of the game. Great teachers want to find great students. I tried to be a good student with my mentor. That entailed several things for me:

First, I never tried to impress him with my knowledge. I always exposed to him my ignorance. To hide ignorance from a teacher is as foolish as hiding sickness from a doctor. A humble person is always more conscious of his ignorance than his knowledge.

Second, a good student never tries to “use” his mentor. A person with a well-known mentor can be tempted to refer to him in ways that really use him, particularly in quoting him out of context. The mentor is for progress, not ego satisfaction. On a few occasions, I have been abused by someone claiming me as his mentor when there was no relation.

Third, a good student works to ask the right questions. Right questions come from thought, analysis, and discernment. There is power in a good question. I have found writing out my questions beforehand to be helpful in minimizing the verbiage.

Fourth, a good student does his homework. In dealing with my two mentors, I never called them unless I had written down on paper what I wanted to talk to them about. When we met, I had organized my questions.

3. *The mentee must show reasonable progress.*

Progress is the pay the mentee gives the mentor. Currently I spend at least 50 percent of my time mentoring talented individuals. I make no charge. But I get amply paid by the vicarious accomplishments of these individuals. Putting our lives into the lives of others is a rewarding, eternal investment.

4. *The mentee needs to develop disciplines to maintain his gains.*

Discipline always starts with a habit. When the habit is practiced enough, it turns into a reflex, and then it doesn't have to be done consciously anymore.

5. *The mentee must possess vision and commitment.*

As a mentee, the two most important elements are having a clear vision and unconditional commitment. History is replete with illustrations of great things accomplished by ordinary individuals with extraordinary vision and commitment.

I recall a story about an ancient philosopher who, when asked by a young man how he could get wisdom, took the young man down to the stream and held his head under the water until he nearly drowned. When he let the young man up, the philosopher said, “Long for wisdom like you longed for air, and you will get it.”

I do not know how to instill passion in a mentee. As a mentor, I try to channel it. I have found that continually reviewing the vision renews the passion. The passion works the plan, overcoming disappointments, and the plan accomplishes the goal.

— FRED SMITH SR.; adapted from [*The Pastor's Soul, Vol. 5: Leading with Integrity*](#), © 1999 by the author or Christianity Today International and published by Bethany House.



Beginning the Mentoring Relationship

Consider this advice for starting and maintaining mentoring relationships.

Proverbs 11:15

Each mentoring situation is unique, but there are several things that have helped me consistently develop meaningful relationships with those I mentor.

Create encounters.

I can't be a mentor unless I have contact with people. So I deliberately become a part of small groups where I can meet people to mentor. For example, I've offered a special theological study group every spring and fall throughout my ministry. For six weeks I have the chance to get close to certain people. Even though sometimes 70 or 80 people come, it still opens doors so I can get to know a few of them. I've also been involved with a men's prayer group on Wednesday mornings. Almost weekly for 19 years I've been able to get close to the men who attend. I can also meet people at retreats and ordinary church events. I watch especially for those who make the effort to make an appointment or come talk to me as a result of those encounters.

Fade into the relationship.

I can't just announce to a likely candidate, "I'm your mentor. I'm going to shape your life." Instead, I've learned I have to send signals that let a person know his life will be safe with me. After all, the person ultimately has to trust me to be a mentor.

The signals are these: I have to stop teaching, listen, and encourage where I see growth. When those signals are flashed time and again, the person I'm interested in mentoring begins to let me see more and more of his life. It's not a matter of not being a mentor one day and being a mentor the next. Mentoring, like most relationships, is something that deepens gradually.

Offer regular check-ins.

Mentoring is rarely an intense relationship. I don't have a list of people I contact week in and week out. It's more of a natural interaction with people when I happen to see them. Still, I have to make the effort to stay in touch, so I want to give people opportunities to check in, to tell me how they're doing and what they're thinking about.

Although sometimes I'll set an appointment with a person, most of the time I just watch for opportunities to strike up a conversation with someone—after a class or meeting, for instance. That's when I'll ask, "Where are you at right now in your thinking? What can I do to help you in your journey?"

Fade out of the relationship.

Mentoring is not like a therapeutic relationship. It's not seven weeks of sessions that are then terminated. I think of it more as an ongoing, highly flexible relationship, checking in with another human being, possibly for the rest of our lives.

There are different levels of involvement, however. And over time the intense mentoring will give way to less frequent meetings. If I have a good mentoring relationship, even if I haven't seen the person for months, we check in with each other in a matter of minutes: I find out quickly what the person's thinking, where he's growing, where he's hurting. Consequently, I have never become overloaded with mentoring relationships, because, while some are relatively intense for a time, they don't remain that way. There are waves of involvement, where some get a great deal of personal attention and others do not.

If I were to reduce the role of a mentor to its simplest terms, I would say a mentor is a friend. Many friends have shaped my life, though they may never have considered themselves as my mentors. Sometimes my friends have helped me discover truth, sometimes they have encouraged me, and sometimes they have mediated the grace of God. And always, my friends valued and affirmed me. And because they did, their influence has changed me and continues to help me, even now as I mentor and influence others.

— EARL PALMER; adapted from [Mastering Teaching](#), © 1991 by Christianity Today International and published by Thomas Nelson.



Checklist for Relationship Building

Focus on relationship, growth, and development with your protégés.

Proverbs 19:20

An important part of being an effective mentor is developing a meaningful relationship with the person you are mentoring. This short checklist offers a guide for getting to know your mentee.

Who Are You?

This focuses on relationship and friendship. To develop a deeper relationship with your mentees:

- Pray with them. Ask what you can pray for on their behalf.
- Take a genuine interest in their family.
- Write them notes of encouragement often.
- Call them or send them cards on their birthdays or anniversaries.
- Make sure you know their life story.
- Make a point to have fun together.

How Are You?

This focuses on transparency and accountability. To help your mentees in their personal growth:

- Share what God is teaching you. Take them to Scripture.
- Share personal struggles and victories.
- Share the value of assessing a group's "health" from your personal perspective.
- Assess the health of the coach's groups together and then work up a "health plan."
- Challenge and encourage your coaches to take their next spiritual steps.

Where Can I Help You?

The following focus on developing and equipping your mentees:

- Go through a book together.
- Do a lunch hour solitude experience.
- Do a prayer walk together.
- Pray and fast together.

— LIFE TOGETHER; adapted from our sister website SmallGroups.com, © 2003. For more articles like this one, visit www.SmallGroups.com.



Signs of Fruitful Mentoring

Use this assessment to gauge how your relationship is progressing.

Psalm 19:7

To measure a mentoring relationship, look for these characteristics:

Trust and confidence:

All the cards are on the table. Anything given in confidence should be held in confidence.

Unvarnished truth:

We should come to the place in the relationship where we can be direct. My two great mentors never had to preface the truth or hedge their statements with me.

Climbs and plateaus:

We progress by climbing, then plateauing for assimilation, then climbing again, plateauing again—repeating the process as long as we live. Don't stop when you reach a comfortable plateau.

Character development:

The mentor teaches, but the Spirit changes character. Although I've been mentoring actively for over 40 years, I cannot claim any success in improving character in adults. Character improves only through spiritual experience.

Mentee initiation:

The mentee is responsible for all contact. He controls the continuation of the relationship. Sometimes a mentoring relationship becomes non-productive and should end. I accept this as normal.

Joy in the doing:

A mentor has accomplished great good when he has taught the individual the joy of accomplishment. That has become so much a part of my life that when I get low, I immediately start to do something that I feel will be worthwhile. The joy of living returns.

— FRED SMITH SR.; adapted from our sister publication LEADERSHIP journal, © 1999 by Christianity Today International. For more articles like this one, visit www.Leadershipjournal.net.



Prayer List

Prayer is an important part of the mentor’s role. Use this list to help you focus your prayer time alone and with your protégé. Make copies and use it throughout your tenure.

For My Protégé

Joys: _____

Concerns: _____

For Myself

Joys: _____

Concerns: _____

For Our Relationship

Joys: _____

Concerns: _____

Scripture: Psalm 1:1–3; Psalm 15:1–5; Proverbs 20:24; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 18:6; Matthew 20:25–28; Luke 18:16–17; John 13:14–17; 1 Corinthians 3:10–11; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 4:1–3; Philippians 1:9–10; Colossians 2:12–14; Hebrews 12:1; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17



Further Exploration

Downloads, websites, and books to equip your mentor.

Building Church Leaders: Leadership training resources from Christianity Today International.

 www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com

- “[Character & Integrity](#)” Assessment Pack
- “[Mentoring](#)” Assessment Pack
- “[Mentoring New Leaders](#)” Practical Ministry Skills
- “[Overcoming a Reluctance to Lead](#)” Survival Guide
- “[Effective Mentoring](#)” Women Leaders

LeadershipJournal.net. This website offers practical advice and articles for church leaders.

[As Iron Sharpens Iron](#) by Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks. Rooted in biblical principles, this book is both a profound and practical guide to mentoring relationships for men. (Moody Publishers, 2000; ISBN 978-0802456311)

[Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth](#) by Richard J. Foster. This classic work on the Christian disciplines can help a mentor guide his or her mentee to a deeper spiritual life. (HarperOne, 1998; ISBN 978-0060628390)

[A How-To Guide for Mentoring Another Christian](#) by Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr. This book prepares the reader with practical tools and usable tips so that he or she can mentor another Christian. (Touch Publications, 2001; ISBN 978-1880828281)

[The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You](#) by Lois J. Zachary. This book is designed as a resource for the protégé. (Jossey-Bass, 2009; ISBN 978-0470343586)

[Mentoring 101](#) by John C. Maxwell. Drawing from many of John Maxwell's bestsellers, this book focuses on essential and time-tested qualities necessary for developing mentoring relationships. (Thomas Nelson, 2008; ISBN 978-1400280223)

[Woman to Woman: Preparing Yourself to Mentor](#) by Edna Ellison and Tricia Scribner. Will guide a woman step-by-step through the process of readying herself for such a mentoring relationship. (New Hope Publishers, 2005; ISBN 978-1563099496)