

Finding and Engaging a Mentor For Churches and Other Christian Faith Based Communities (With Appendix A and B)

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Note: That which is in red is what is covered in the CCC training video.

Preamble

- When a mentor is considering potential mentors, it is often wise to first consider the various forms of mentoring. It is often that one's view of mentoring is anemic. If it is, this could be why mentoring isn't a part of learning experiences. See Appendix A for a non-exhaustive list of mentoring forms.
- More often than not, the form of mentoring that is needed by a Christian mentee is the formed called "companion/friend in Christ." This form of mentoring is one who "sits on the balcony" with the mentee as they together consider the mentee's whole life. While this mentor may have a level of expertise in a certain life dimension, this mentor is not an expert in every dimension. Instead he/she is good at asking questions that help the mentee discern a particular need or goal. Again, it isn't that the mentor helps meet that need or goal. Instead the mentor helps the mentee discern the goal and maybe even help discern a secondary "ground floor" mentor who has that expertise. See Appendix B.
- The above said, the second most popular form of mentoring is apprenticeship. This is someone who focuses primarily on helping the mentee engage well in his/her professional life. This form of mentoring is someone who is "on the ground" with the mentee as a skill is learned. This mentor might be able to get up on the balcony as well but the primary reason a mentee has pursued this mentor is to learn and practice a new skill set. See Appendix B.
- And then of course, some mentoring forms sit BOTH on the ground and on the balcony with you. For example, an executive coach often knows her mentor/client as a whole people. This coach is both on the balcony focusing questions on the whole of the mentee/client's personhood. If the coach has a level of expertise for a particular professional goal, the coach can step down on the ground for a short while and act as a trainer or consultant for that mentee/client's professional need.

This remainder of this document focuses primarily on finding a mentor who is a companion/friend in Christ. This doesn't mean, however, that the following won't help you if you are looking for a mentor that is a different form.

Finding a Companion/Friend in Christ Mentor

- What to look for
 - Someone you enjoy
 - Someone who has availability. Avoid thinking you need the popular or up-front person to be your mentor.
 - Relational person - someone who would enjoy you and a mentoring process
 - **Someone who embraces: "follow me as I follow Christ" and knows they aren't perfect.**
 - **Mentoring is "a brain to pick, an ear to listen and a push in the right direction." Most mentors have a bent towards one of these. Thus consider finding**
 - **A listener but not someone who hides behind listening.**

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- Someone who is willing to have their “brain picked” but doesn’t take up all the air space by talking too much.
 - Someone able to “steer you in the right direction” if the situation calls for it. But someone who also knows they aren’t there to “fix you.”
- Consider your past mentors (even if you didn’t call them a mentor back then). Consider not just the good mentors but the mentors who didn’t serve you well. What qualities did they possess?
- Consider the benefit of being mentee-driven.
 - As you look for a mentor, be ok that it is YOU who is looking for what you need. This doesn’t need to be dictated by someone else’s preferences.
 - Consider your own gifts, wiring, needs.
 - Consider your repeated successes or failures and how these are a rich resource for learning. Will the mentor honor this?
- Consider that you might need a mentor that isn’t already your life-long friend.
- Consider that the current life-long friend is already a mentor to you and that you want, for a season to get REALLY intentional about learning something together (use a learning plan?). Friendships are intended for sharpening and sometimes we get lazy and need a “shot in the arm.” Learning plans together help!

Identify your existential barriers (here are just a few...see hand out for more) (the things about you that keep you from being mentored). Consider how to respond to these barriers.

- I fear imposing upon the time and energy of a possible mentor.
- I don’t need a mentor: independence, a lot of experience, my age and life experience.
- I’m old. I require an older mentor. Thus, mentors are few and far between.
- I just moved here. I don’t know anyone.
- I’m a female and what I want to train for has mostly men in the leadership roles. Will they mentor me one-on-one?
- I have extremely high (and potentially unreasonable) expectations.
- I’m an introvert -- OR -- I’m an extrovert.
- I don’t want people to know how much I don’t know.
- I don’t like asking for help. It’s hard to believe people WANT to be with me or help me.

How do I go about finding a mentor?

- Church (your church or another church)
 - Ask the pastor, small group leader, etc. Who in this church would make for a good companion for me?
 - Also ask: Who outside this church would make a good mentor?
 - Don’t overlook the normal ordinary God fearing person.
 - Don’t be too enamored by the charismatic leaders. This can make so the “old souls” are overlooked. Often an “old soul” who has time is the best mentor.
- Networking—neighbors, friends, colleagues
 - Everyone knows somebody who knows somebody. Look everywhere.
 - Ask an old professor or colleague if they know someone.
 - Perhaps you have a friend who always has a mentor. Ask this friend to help you.
- Prayer
 - Invite family and friends to pray with and for you.

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- Ask God to lay possible mentors in your path.
- Pay attention
 - Watch for the promptings of the Spirit.
 - Pay attention to people: Who has already “shown up” in your life as a listener or wise friend that can now be your mentor in seminary?
- Don’t look for perfect. But look for good. Look for people committed to doing their reasonable best.

Making the Ask

- Pray, believe, trust.
- Leave a voice mail and call back.
- Invite them for coffee to explore a possible mentoring relationship.
- If the word mentor or mentoring might get in the way, ask if you can do an “informational interview” about their own learning/growing life, or about “how they have grown.” Then in that meeting tell them you will someone to companion you as you become a more intentional learner. Ask what advice they have for you. And, ask if they might either: (1) help you network or, (2) serve as a time bound friend/guide/mentor.

Interacting with Mentors

- Define how long you will meet. You might already be friends but say, “for these next 12 weeks when we meet I wish to be focused on intentional mentoring.” This is where the use of a learning plan helps to stay intentional. Perhaps the two of you will engage a learning plan (the same one or separate ones) at the same time and mentor one another.
- After you are done with your defined timeline, celebrate and close that “official time” together. And if you are life-long friends, continue on in that.
- Be responsible for mentee-driven conversations
 - Ask the questions
 - Present the convo topic
 - Seek the needed advice
 - Ask for reflection on a life experience
- Let your mentor guide the conversation without having to drive it
 - What a mentor can say to a mentees: “You call the play each week, I’ll call the audible if needed.” Why? Sometimes a mentee doesn’t know what they need!
- Learning plans (if being used by you) are an aspect of the conversations, not the whole of them
- Perhaps read a book together for a discussion booster. If there is a practice in a learning plan that your mentor would enjoy also doing, do it together or simultaneously
- Spend creative time together
 - Mentoring does not have to equal coffee.
 - Shared activities can help build trust. You don’t have to be in serious conversation every time you meet.
 - Shared “outreach” activities can be a point of reflection.
 - Shared meals with each other’s families is often a good thing (but not always possible)
 - “Ride along in the cop car” with your mentor. Observe them at work even if their field is different than yours. Jot down questions and ask later.
 - Find case studies you can reflect on together.
 - Go for a walk and say nothing the entire hour. End in prayer. Go your separate ways for that day. **It’s powerful! Trust me.** Next time you meet, talk about what you learned from that experience.

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Appendix A

Mentoring Forms and Definitions

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Companioning in Christ -- A companion in Christ is someone devoted to being alongside another person in Christ for a certain season. Rarely is the season life-long. The purpose for gathering together is to discern areas of growth and transformation in all the dimensions of human life, even if there is an extended season of discerning needs in only one dimension. Often the process is mutual, in that each member is sharing their desire to grow in Christ with the other. The companions may have an expert voice in any one goal that is set, even creating an apprenticeship for the other. But this is not necessary for companioning in Christ because it is the duty of each person to resource their growth goals outside of the relationship. This work done together as companions in Christ is all by the power of the Holy Spirit, in dependency on the Father and for the sake of Christ and others.

Coaching (Life/Executive/General) -- Coaching involves “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize either their personal and professional potential.”¹

Spiritual Directing -- “We define Christian spiritual direction as help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.”²

Group Mentoring -- Group mentoring is a relational learning process in which individual learners with particular learning goals come together in an organized fashion for the purposes of collaborating on each other’s learning goals so that ideas and resources are shared. Dependent on the nature of the group, the particular learning goals might be strictly professional in nature or could involve a member’s very personal lives.

Apprenticing -- An apprenticeship is process in which the learner places himself/herself under the guidance of a skilled expert for the purposes of learning a particular skill associated with any one form of work, trade or task.

Teaching -- Teaching is learning process in which an expert gathers learners together so that he/she might share his her knowledge on a subject. More often than not, it is in a group setting, although it can be individualized. Teaching often involves a variety of shared learning tasks determined by the teacher including lectures, reading, papers and projects in which the student has the opportunity to learn and have a better understanding of the subject matter at hand.

Sponsoring -- A sponsor is “one who assumes responsibility for some other person or thing.”³ At Alcoholics Anonymous, a sponsor has a continuing responsibility to help the new member towards a new way of life. A sponsor can also be “one who presents a candidate for baptism or confirmation and undertakes responsibility for the person’s religious education or spiritual welfare.”⁴

Counseling -- “Professional counseling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals.”⁵

¹ “ICF Definition of Coaching,” accessed 7/1/18, <https://coachfederation.org/about>.

² “Christian Spiritual Direction,” William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, Center for Religious Development, accessed 7/1/18, <http://www.sdiworld.org>.

³ “Sponsor,” Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed 7/1/18, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sponsor>.

⁴ “Sponsor,” Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed 7/1/18, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sponsor>.

⁵ “About ACA,” American Counseling Association, accessed 7/1/18, <https://www.counseling.org/about-us/about-aca>.

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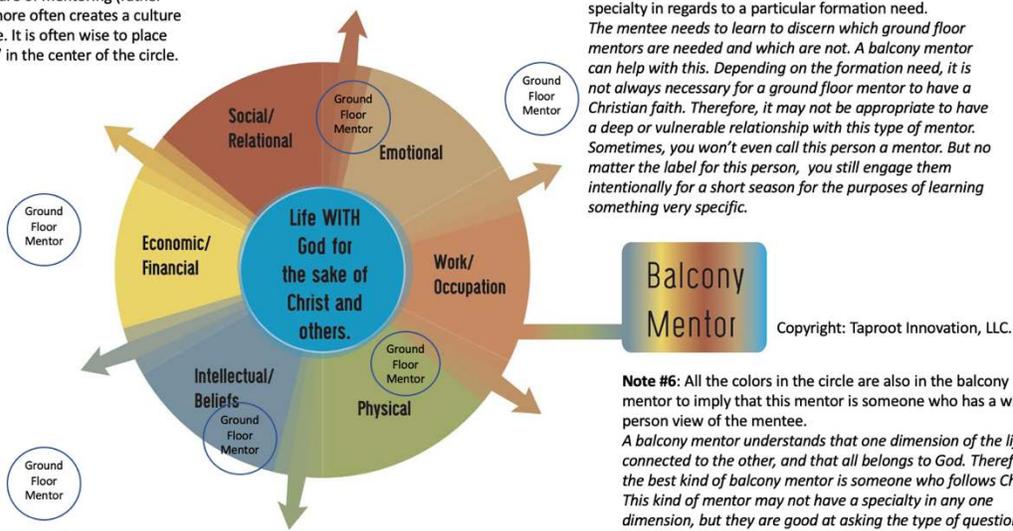
Appendix B

Interdependent Mentoring Posture Explained

Note #1: An interdependent posture of mentoring (rather than a closed or open posture), more often creates a culture a mentoring over a course of time. It is often wise to place an overall "life vision" or "theme" in the center of the circle.

Note #2: Pay attention to the fact that the word "spiritual" is not one of the dimensions. Consider the following:
*The question is NOT "what is spiritual and what is not?"
 The question is, "to whose spirit do I surrender in any one dimension of my life?" We learn surrender (albeit slowly) so that a life lived WITH God is more realized as we age. The arrows in this image imply that the blue circle will grow larger.*

Note #3: Notice that the dimensions in this image bleed into one another.
The growth we pursue with a mentor in a particular capacity of our personhood is never discrete (or separate), but it is definable. Because it is definable, formation needs (learning goals) can be discerned.



Note #4: Consider this definition of a formation need: A particular character or skill that needs to be cultivated in concert WITH God's transforming power.
Use this image to discern what formation needs you might have in one dimension or another. Some formation needs touch on several dimensions.

Note #5: Ground floor mentors are more often than not, easier to find. Ground floor mentors are people who have a specialty in regards to a particular formation need.
The mentee needs to learn to discern which ground floor mentors are needed and which are not. A balcony mentor can help with this. Depending on the formation need, it is not always necessary for a ground floor mentor to have a Christian faith. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to have a deep or vulnerable relationship with this type of mentor. Sometimes, you won't even call this person a mentor. But no matter the label for this person, you still engage them intentionally for a short season for the purposes of learning something very specific.

Balcony Mentor

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Note #6: All the colors in the circle are also in the balcony mentor to imply that this mentor is someone who has a whole person view of the mentee.
A balcony mentor understands that one dimension of the life is connected to the other, and that all belongs to God. Therefore, the best kind of balcony mentor is someone who follows Christ. This kind of mentor may not have a specialty in any one dimension, but they are good at asking the type of questions that help the mentee figure out a formation need and discern the kind of ground floor mentor that may be needed so that a formation need is pursued. While we may not always have a ground floor mentor at a certain time in our lives, it is typically wise to have a balcony mentor, someone we can see every once in a while.