

Spiritual Mentoring: How to Help Others Grow in Their Relationship with Christ
C.S. Lewis Institute Mentoring Training
Tom Schwanda

Friday, May 20, 2011

1. Introduction to the Weekend:

2. Definition of the Term “Mentor”

. Tom Schwanda’s generic definition of mentoring: “Coming along side of an individual or group of individuals to learn a skill, develop an ability or deepen some experience of life.”

. Jesus’ example of mentoring: Luke 24:13-35

. Essential to have a mentor before you are a mentor!

. Differentiation of terms: spiritual friend, spiritual companion, mentor, spiritual guide, spiritual director.

. Mentoring is not trying to fix people, give advice, solve problems, or therapy.

. Intentional vs. Unintentional Mentoring.

3. Nature and Need for Mentoring in Today’s Church:

. Growing awareness of the importance of mentoring.

. Spiritual hunger and longing for experience and intimacy with God.

. Increasing fragmentation and mobility and decreased supportive relationships

. Self-deception and blind spots.

4. Three Keys to Becoming Spiritual Mentor:

. Depending upon the Holy Spirit

. Cultivating attentive listening

. Asking good questions

5. Cultivating Attentive Listening:

. Dynamics of Listening. Research varies but most reflect the following:

. Words communicate- of a message, tone- and facial expressions/body language- .

. Attentive listening communicates

. **QUOTE:** “Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies.” **AND** “We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, Harper & Row, 98, 99).

6. Learning to Listen Contemplatively. Wisdom of James 1:19:

. Importance of amplifying the sound or voice or experience. Similar to Hebrew poetry in the Pss 95:1; 96:1-2; 138:1-2; etc.

. Components of contemplative listening. Douglas Steere (*Weavings* 13, no. 3(May/June 1998): 39-40):

. Vulnerability

. Acceptance

. Expectancy

. Constancy

. Desire to help mentoree notice and name their experience.

7. Bracketing and the Challenge of Focused Listening

8. Attentive Listening Exercise: Turn to the person next to you or close to you and begin a conversation. Spend 7-8 minutes introducing yourself (if you do not know the person) or bring them up to date on something new in your life since you have last spoken. Seek to practice the principles of attentive listening. Once one person has spoken, reverse the roles. Once both persons have spoken reflect on your experience. What did the other person do that was helpful in listening to you? What else would you have found helpful?

. Mentoring reminder: *it all depends!*

9. Guidelines for Cultivating Contemplative Listening:

- . Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance and ability to listen attentively.
- . Relax and trust God.
- . Bracket out interruptions or items that connect with your own stuff.
- . Seek to gently amplify a key theme or aspect of the conversation.
- . Do not be afraid of the mentoree's silence.
- . Hold your tongue (Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 91)

. Listen deeply before speaking. **QUOTE:** "So our first questions are not, What am I going to say to this person? Or, How do I keep from saying the wrong thing? Rather, they are What is God saying? and How can I listen alertly to this person... Our primary role is not to provide answers but to listen in a way that helps us and our friend listen for what God is saying" (Timothy Jones, *Finding a Spiritual Friend: How Friends and Mentors Can Make Your Faith Grow*, Upper Room Books, 1998, p, 122).

10. Noticing God in All of Life.

- . Recognizing what the person didn't say.
- . Summary challenge:

Saturday, May 21, 2011

1. The Gift of Questions:

1. Questions enlarge our ability to listen to God, others, and our self.
2. Questions place the mentor in the role of learner.
3. Questions encourage dialogue.
4. Questions are not as threatening as statements.
5. Questions continue to work within our minds after the conversation has ended.
6. Questions are a helpful way of determining need and interest.
7. Questions create dreams and motivate us to grow deeper.

2. Nature and Purpose of Questions:

- . Honest
- . Appropriate
- . Open-ended questions

3. Jesus' Use of Questions:

- . "What do you want me to do for you" (Mk 10:51)?
- . "Who do you say I am" (Mt 16:15)?
- . "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition" (Mt 15:30)?
- . "Where is your faith" (Lk 8:25)?
- . "Do you love me more than these" (Jn 21:15)?

4. Proper Use of Questions:

- . Importance of timing

. **Recognize the importance of mystery. QUOTES:** Calvin's sense of the true presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper; "Now if anyone should ask me how this takes place, I shall not be ashamed to confess that it is a secret too lofty for either my mind to comprehend or my words to declare. And, to speak more plainly, I rather experience than understand it" (John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17.32). C.S. Lewis speaking of the Lord's Supper once said; "Take and eat; not take and understand" (C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964, p. 104). This is not an invitation to laziness but recognition of the limits of our minds and the depth of God.

5. Learning How to Develop Good Questions:

- . Ask open-ended questions.
- . Ask easy questions at the beginning of a new relationship or when you are in a social setting.
- . Ask more challenging questions as your relationship grows.
- . Ask questions that are clear.
- . Ask questions that are specific and brief.

- . Ask a variety of questions.
- . Ask questions with an attitude of acceptance and respect.
- . Ask about things that really interest you.
- . Ask if a question is appropriate.
- . Asking why questions can be threatening.
- . Don't manipulate or pry.
- . Seek to combine questions.

6. Asking Questions Exercise. One person (speaker) begins addressing an issue or situation that is of interest to them. The other person (listener) seeks to gently offer inviting questions to guide the speaker into expanding the conversation. Reflect on both the process of asking questions (listener) and also receiving questions (speaker). Trade places and repeat the same activity.

7. Sample Questions for Mentoring (Walt Wright, *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004.), 110-126):

- . Who are you and who do you intend to be?
- . What is important here? What is at stake? Are there more choices?
- . What do you fear? Where do you need to grow? What does failure teach? What does trust look like?
- . Why? Who cares? How do creativity and constraint serve each other?
- . What might change? How deeply are you invested personally? Why should people trust you?
- . How are you communicating? Where are you communicating? How transparent is your leadership (or life)? Where does insecurity constrain you?
- . Where do you experience conflict? How do you manage conflict? When did you last change? What does flexibility mean?
- . What does stewardship mean? Why do you stay in (your ministry or respective area of passion or interest)?
- . What is important to you? How healthy are your relationships? What are you teaching (those around you)? What are you learning? What gives you energy?
- . What legacy are you leaving? What does integrity mean? (What do you feel those who follow you around are learning from you?).

8. Beginning and Developing a Mentoring Relationship:

- . Finding a mentor or mentoree
- . Use of Life Story as a way of beginning a new relationship.
- . Developing a Mentoring Covenant

. How to create a covenant? Consider the specific responsibilities of both the mentor and the mentoree:

. Mentors commit themselves to: listening, confidentiality, depending upon the Holy Spirit, modeling, prayer, sharing resources and their network, encouraging, etc.... What else depending upon the specific type of mentoring?

. Mentorees commit themselves to: openness and teachable spirit, depending upon the Holy Spirit, initiative, accountability, confidentiality, learning, prayer, etc.... What else depending upon the specific type of mentoring?

. Consider also time commitment and frequency of meeting, topics to be explored, location, evaluation-when and how, and any other expectations. I realize that this can sound rather mechanical, but it can really create a more healthy framework from which to develop a mentoring relationship.

- . Special concerns (e.g. referral and coming to closure)

9. Overview to Discernment. Tom Schwanda's definition "discernment is the process of sorting out, sifting through or testing between options to perceive the leading God's Spirit in any given situation."

- . Western tendency to use our minds to discern, to sift, and reason.

10. Biblical and Historical Examples of Discernment (1 Kg.3:9; 1 Jn.4; 1 Th.5:20-21)

- . Jesus and discernment (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43; 16:6; cf. Matt 7:15-20; 12:33-35).
- . Classic example of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), *Spiritual Exercises*
- . Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) *The Religious Affections*

11. Assumptions of Discernment:

- . God delights to be in union and communion with us.
- . The more we desire to know God the more we will actually experience God.

- . We have an incredible capacity for deception and illusion.
- . Discernment is best practiced in community.
- . Discernment is a process and an art.

12. Discerning God's Presence and Experiences

- . Contemplative listening and paying attention to the Spirit.

13. Suggestions for Discerning God's Voice:

- . Stay close to Jesus.
- . Learn from the saints of church history.
- . Quality or "weight" of the voice (Mk 1:22; Mt 7:29; etc.).
- . Tone of voice
- . Content of the voice
- . Does the voice resemble Jesus' voice?
- . Does the message or word come with power to your soul?

. **QUOTE:** "The voice of the subconscious argues with you, tries to convince you; but the inner voice of God does not argue, does not try to convince you. It just speaks, and it is self-authenticating. It has the feel of the voice of God within it" (E. Stanley Jones quoted in Klaus Issler, *Wasting Time with God*. IVP, 177). **ILLUS:** Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler (Mt 19:16-30). Jesus didn't soften the demands of discipleship but let him make his own response and walk away.

14. Overview to Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556):

- . Feelings or affective approach and the desires of the heart
- . Consolation
- . Desolation

15. Reflection Exercise Using the Examination of Consciousness: Ask yourself: Where have I meet God? Where have I missed God in the last 24 hours? Reflect on an experience or two and share that with a partner. Use all of the principles you have learned so far in your practice of listening. Repeat and trade roles.

. One of the critical areas in ministry and especially in mentoring is to recognize that we all have blind spots, prejudices and weaknesses. This is why we need self-awareness. **ILLUS:** Richard Baxter, *Reformed Pastor*, “Keep watch over yourself” (Acts 20:28).

16. The Practice of Discernment of a Call (following Ignatius’ rational approach). Interesting to recognize, that once Ignatius died, his fellow Jesuits reduced the emphasis upon affections of consolation and desolation and in place elevated the rational approach that Ignatius considered more of a “fallback” approach (Dorr, *Faith at Work*, 119). Their reason was due to a basic mistrust of the consolation and desolation approach, which in recent years has been recovered and given greater prominence. While there are different approaches and methods of discernment they normally include the following principles (These suggested steps are strongly reflective of the Ignatian approach):

1. Preparation. Psalm 139:23-24 captures the essence of this preparation. Begin by asking the God question; “God what do you want me to do in this situation?” As odd as this question might be, we are often frankly not interested in what God wants because we rather follow our own interests or plan. Abba Poeman (an early Christian spiritual guide from the fourth-fifth century desert tradition) counsels; “Do not give your heart to that which does not satisfy your heart.” Notice how this principle and the entire process of discernment build upon our perception of God. If we have a healthy perception of God we will not have to fear the outcome of our decisions. However, if we hold a distorted perception of God we will obviously have more fear around this process.

2. Framing the question. Be as specific and clear as possible in stating what you are seeking to discern.

3. Request God’s guidance. Be specific in requesting that the Holy Spirit would guide and make clear the next steps for you. Psalm 143:10; Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:26-27 provides a helpful foundation from which to pray for this guidance.

4. Listening to God. God desires to be in communion with you. Part of that communion is guiding you in ways so that you will live in deeper dependence and awareness of God. At this point the wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola is helpful. Create a chart, making one column to represent all of the positive reasons for doing something and create a second column listing all of the reasons for not accepting the call.

5. Live with each option. As you read and pray through the positive column imagine your self-accepting the call. Do this for one or two days. Journaling is very helpful at this stage. Record your wrestling, questions, and impressions. Ignatius would challenge you to ask what leads you closer to God (consolation) or away from God (desolation). Or which decision would bring the greater glory to God. Next you reverse the process and do the same thing with the negative column, asking whether living with this decision brings you closer or farther from God. After you have lived in both possible decisions ask which one seems to bring you closer to God.

4-5a. *Alternative.* Instead of using the above rational approach, try the following alternative method. Renew your desire to follow God’s call. Pray and seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance. As you are praying about a specific issue wait patiently and notice if any images or other impressions seem to surface. How might these images or impressions reinforce or weaken the call or decision that you are considering.

6. Seek feedback from others. It is not wise to practice discernment in isolation. Nor should you make a major decision amid emotional upheaval or depression because it tends to cloud your mind and heart. As you are going through the process and especially as you are seeking to come to a decision, seek out the wisdom of the community. Do others affirm you in this position or role or do they wonder if it is the best use for your gifts. Some people find it valuable and helpful to have a spiritual director, mentor or trusted friend.

7. Proceed with God's grace. Regardless of how much time and care you devote to discernment it will never be a 100 percent accurate. We are flawed humans with divided hearts and twisted loyalties. But sooner or later you must decide and take action. A helpful prayer to use at this place is John Calvin's motto: "I offer my heart promptly and sincerely to you O Lord." As you offer your heart and life to God act as you have sensed yourself being guided. If it turns out later that this was not the best decision ask what you learned that could assist you in making better decisions next time.

QUOTE: My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone (Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, 83).

17. Summary and Challenge

Further Reading:

Anderson, Keith R. and Randy Reese. *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Bakke, Jeannette A. *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

Benner, David G. *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Horsfall, Tony. *Mentoring for Spiritual Growth: Sharing the Journey*. Abingdon, UK: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2008.

Houston, James M. *The Mentored Life: From Individualism to Personhood*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.

Johnson, W. Brad and Charles R. Ridley. *The Elements of Mentoring*, rev. ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Wright, Walter C. *Mentoring: The Promise of Relational Leadership*. Milton Keynes, Buck, England: Paternoster Press, 2004.

Zachary, Lois J. *The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Tom Schwanda