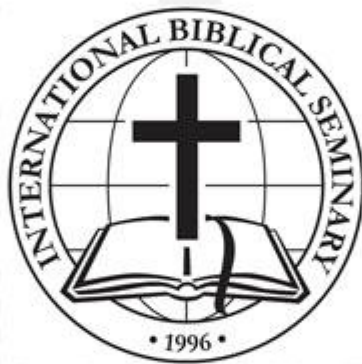


# **Mentor**

**One on One**



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**International Biblical Seminary--Bivocational Ministry.**

**Chapter 1:**

## **YOU CAN BE A MENTOR**

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## Chapter One: You can be a mentor

This book is written for you. It is written with you in mind if you are a mentor, or being mentored, or a soon-to-be mentor, or a self-made mentor aspired to help others to struggle less than yourself in their Christian growth. Yes, I said “Christian,” for the principles of mentoring in this book are all excerpts from the Bible. But please don’t drop your reading if you are not a Christian yet for you might like it. It is not my purpose, nor my style in this book to bore you.

First of all, the word “mentor” is not found in the Bible, at least in the versions I have encountered with but the concept of mentor is everywhere in the Bible; there were many people mentored by great leaders; for instance, by a courageous general, a mighty prophet, a famous king, a knowledgeable scholar, ah, yes, by a Carpenter who produced the best yokes. That’s right, I gave you enough hints. The above mentioned mentors in their times are Moses who mentored Joshua, Elijah who mentored Elisha, King David who not only mentored Solomon but set examples to all Judea kings after him, and the knowledgeable scholar was Apostle Paul with Timothy and Titus the apprentices at his side; and of course the most wonderful Carpenter who forever lives, Jesus the Nazarene and His twelve disciples. You may call the disciples by any other names, followers, attendants, helpers, pourers of water, servants, but the one fact which is common to all of them, is that they intentionally sat under their mentor’s feet to learn and were instructed, encouraged, shaped, supervised, directed, corrected, cared for, developed to their potentials. There was a total care of the mentor to the mentee.

Perhaps this is a good time to take a closer look at the word disciple, which is a biblical term anyway and some purists would prefer it. Yes, disciple and mentor can be used in a pair, with their meanings complimentary to each other. However, and unfortunately, the word disciple has been overused and misused in the 70’s of the last century. There was a “Disciple movement” which preached on strong disciplines of new Christians; their practices were legalistic at least, bordering cultic. When we look back now, we detect that the mistakes might have been stemmed from the modern understanding of discipline, as in disciplinary actions. But the idea of discipline is not the primary meaning with the word disciples. Disciple movement asked for a total submission in a commune lifestyle, modeling the first century Christian community, so the disciples can be monitored by the leader and by each other; much abuses and unhealthy relationships finally corrupted this movement.

Jesus never did this to the Twelve, Moses never disciplined Joshua; instead the mentor took the responsibility lovingly and pour his life into his mentee for the benefit and spiritual development of the latter. We see from these biblical examples how a legacy was passed on from one generation to the next; and here you have it in a nutshell what mentoring is all about. It is not just teaching as we know of education, the knowledge is very personalized, these people did not learn from classroom setups,

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rather, they learn from a person, a live one; to them the knowledge was never dead or canned. In fact, I suspect that in a lecture-type of education nowadays, even recognized by peers a good professor may not be a good mentor at all. There are things in common; for instance, the purpose of education is the same for both mentors and teachers, they all try to make the students better prepared to enter their next step of lives, but there are fundamental differences.

To start with, a mentor is more adapted to each mentee's ability to learn while the teacher tends to set a standard for the students of the whole class to measure up to. In a typical university classroom the professors, especially the more famous ones, hardly know the names of the students. By popular demands and perhaps in order to maximize the "efficiency" of the professors albeit in terms of their salaries, when the number of students exceeds the capacity the school just give them a larger room. I dare to say that this kind of education is more interested in the quickest way to dispense knowledge rather than developing people. Smart students of course get the most benefits but the average ones are likely lost in a multitude. The remedy is what known as TA system, but I wonder if the TA's are aware of their roles to make sure the learning happens. Mentoring, on the other hand, focus on one to one relations for the benefits of each individual.

Can we say that, "mentoring is personalized knowledge"?

If there is a personalized knowledge then there is a "material knowledge", by this I mean the kind of knowledge you can get (gather?) from a book, internet, or something, or a famous professor as we just mentioned. True knowledge starts with experience, according to the Greeks. My daughter repeated to me what her mentor told them when she entered into her residency after four years of formal medical education, that "you have gained just enough knowledge to earn a privilege to learn medicine." Come to think of it, training a physician is such a risky business; they are allowed to touch a live person, to mess with him or her and still keep that person alive. When Margaret eventually could be called a real Doctor, my father out of curiosity asked her how many C-sections had she had performed, expecting perhaps a low double-digit answer. I won't forget his facial expression when Margaret paused for a moment (as if she was counting) and said nonchalantly, "Oh, 3 or 4 hundreds, I guess." My dad was so taken back he could not carry on an otherwise very interesting conversation. Well, I don't know if your OBGYN is specialized in surgical but they don't allow the doctors take it lightly to perform operations on any patient without being mentored first. I can't help but think about the first patient Margaret put her scalpel on. What a courageous woman she must be, indeed! (Maybe the young doctor was more nervous.) Sure, her mentor must have been with them to make sure all procedures go well. Are there other ways to learn? Maybe! But then, some poor women would be the first to receive the knife from an inexperienced, non-mentored doctor; shall we ask her if she feels comfortable?

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So, the preliminary knowledge prepares one to be a mentee. In our spiritual case, the pre-requisite of a mentee must be one who has a Christ-given spiritual life; some call it conversion, others regeneration, born-again, or the like. After all, we are supposedly matured into Christ likeness as our final goal of full salvation; without this spiritual life we cannot by imitation or being mentored from outside to achieve what happens inside. Does this mean, then, we will not take care of our non-believer friends or seekers? No; just the opposite! The caring must precede the mentoring, especially for our friends who do not know Christ personally. The true mentoring, however, is a spiritual thing and it cannot happen unless one willingly and readily invites Jesus into his/her life.

In my opinion, it is best to start mentoring with a new believer as soon as possible; and the reason? There is a fairly large amount of unlearning from the past when one becomes a Christian; for examples, being selfish, inconsiderate, low self-esteem, or even worse, substance abuses, are all diseases that need to be taken care of as soon as possible. Liken to our personal health, prolonging a bad habit makes the physical condition worse, but be careful of whom you seek for help, though. If you unfortunately find a bad doctor, he might misjudge the symptom and mistreat you. The worst that can happen to a new Christian than finding no mentor at all is to have to unlearn from a bad mentor's damage. This is why it is more difficult to get people out of a religious cult or an extremist group and lead them into the right way.

Then, yes, we know that mentoring involves setting good examples for the mentees to unlearn the mistakes. (Be careful, don't be self-righteous!) Here is the good news: we all make mistakes but our God is gracious to give us second chances. You noticed, yes, I said, "second chances," not "a second chance;" just like you enjoy "unlimited seconds" in your favorite all-you-can-eat restaurant. The difference is that we don't get fat by having too many seconds. God forgives while we learn. What good it benefits us if we are allowed to learn from our mistakes but the consequences of mistakes are accumulative, not forgiven and have marred us forever? The first thing a mentor must let the mentee know, is—no, not 'your sins are forgiven'; it is that: "As your mentor, I have weakness and made mistakes, and bound to make more—but we grow into maturity." In addition, tell the mentee, "The first part of the statement, that I made mistakes, (but learned lessons) qualifies me to be a mentor and the second part, bound to make more, makes me a better mentor by not looking too highly at myself, and I have room to grow." Mentors are human beings, not smaller gods. We can never be self-righteous, thinking 'we have arrived'; mistakes and weakness are constant reminders that we are not soliciting the respects from the ones we lead but in humble desire to share what we have learned, often by previous mistakes. We are not recruiting our followers or building fan clubs but we must teach people "Be imitators of me as I imitate Christ."

As of unlearning, there is usually also a necessary healing; chances are, when we follow a mentor we respect him or her too much, not understanding that we are following an imperfect image of Christ.

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Remember the shock when a more mature Christian (so you think) did not live up to your expectation? True, mentors are supposed to reflect or radiate Jesus, but more often than not, we mentors are so imperfect, we are opaque than transparent, there is very little light of Christ that filters through us; instead we block others to see Jesus. In this retrospect, can we blame others, or even our mentors that hurt us? Surely, you can, but it does not help us to grow. Now, playing a game of role reversal might help. Forgive them and you will be a better mentor yourself.

Did you figure out already from what I just said that mentor is to set examples of forgiveness? Did you say “yes”? Congratulations! Yes, forgive and ask forgiveness. You do well in leading your mentee into abundance of God’s grace and becoming a gracious person. This may be the first lessons you teach your mentee (that we are imperfect) but the more important thing is, that by forgiving your mentor of the past hurts if you ever need to, and you have cut off the lineage of influence, break the bondage and set yourself free on the right track to help others. I have seen people complaining of their past of not having a good mentor but repeat the same pattern themselves. We can start afresh.

I have said enough of the subject matter about being a mentor; let us come back to the title of this chapter: You can be a mentor, because

- you are born again, you received a new life from above
- you desire to learn and grow spiritually
- you love to help others in their spiritual journeys
- you believe the biblical examples of mentoring as an effective way to mode lives
- you would think that with the best teachers one still needs a personal mentor
- you figured out that a good mentor benefits young believers most
- you know the mentors are not suppose to lord over others but to dispense TLC
- you prefer to work alongside people in solving their problems
- you understand that learning is different for everyone, even custom-fit to each individual
- you agree with the Greeks that a true knowledge must be accompanied by life experiences
- you are convinced that we learn better with live examples around us

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- you lament the fact that we indeed had too many things we need to unlearn
- you gladly forgive others in order to forget the past and move on
- you admit that in our imperfection we can still help each other for we eventually follow Jesus
- you praise God for He has given you so many second chances
- you become humble because of God's grace on your weaknesses
- you are therefore grateful and want to be gracious to all
- you want to be a mentor

### **Group discussion suggestions for mentors:**

1. What are the aspirations for you (each member of the mentor group) to become a mentor?
2. Specific example you pick from biblical mentor-disciple stories: discuss the relations, the dynamics, the effects, the accountabilities, etc.
3. What is your idea of discipleship? Leaning towards disciplines or biblical mentor concept?  
(This discussion is most useful before you move on to the section of the 70's.)
4. What is education? Can a person be "uneducated" yet knowledgeable?
5. What are the possible purposes and benefits of mentoring?
6. Why is classroom-type education (lectures) still necessary, and perhaps even effective?
7. What can a mentor accomplish which classroom cannot do?
8. In your opinion, are Teaching Assistants (in universities) well trained to be mentors?
9. Can you think of other professions or lines of work, other than doctors, that mentoring is a must?
10. Are there commonality between personal evangelism and mentoring?
11. What are the most painful things you have to unlearn after you become a Christian?
12. Are you hurt more by the people you respect, close to you, or the ones you don't really care?  
Why?

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13. Do you think Paul would be a perfect mentor for you? Why?
14. Which is harder: forgive or ask forgiveness?
15. God uses imperfect people to perfect you; think about it! Isn't He wise? Please comment!

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