

# LIFE-CHANGING COMPANIONS



## Book 2

### The Craft of Spiritual Mentoring

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**LIFE-CHANGING COMPANIONS (Book Two)**  
**Edition 1.0**

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A Training Course on Spiritual Mentoring



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M I N I S T R I E S

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# Contents

## **Book Two: THE CRAFT OF SPIRITUAL MENTORING**

|                                                  |      |
|--------------------------------------------------|------|
| Welcome to <i>Life-Changing Companions</i>       | p.2  |
| Session 1      Mentoring on Your Knees           | p.3  |
| Session 2      Questions before Answers          | p.18 |
| Session 3      Listen to the Spirit & Each Other | p.32 |
| Session 4      Practicing Encouragement          | p.47 |
| Session 5      They Don't Belong to You          | p.61 |

# Welcome

## Welcome to *Life-Changing Companions*

This nine-lesson training course on spiritual mentoring is part of Barnabas School of Leadership's commitment to a life-on-life, relational approach to developing church leaders.

To gain the most benefit, it needs to be completed, either with another person, or in a small group. Each of the studies has four key sections:

1. **Prepare** (What are the main questions?)
2. **Study** (What does the Bible say?)
3. **Read** (What do others say?)
4. **Discuss & Apply** (What can we learn from each other and how can we apply this to life and ministry?)

Steps 1-3 need to be completed in your own time, and Step 4 is where you explore and apply what you have learned.

The first four lessons (Book One) in *Life-Changing Companions* look at the Art of Spiritual Mentoring. It is an “art”—involving heart issues and Spirit-led attitudes. The five lessons in Book Two are on the craft of spiritual mentoring. You will develop some of the tools you need as you watch the Holy Spirit produce transformation in your relationships.

Keep Psalm 127:1 in mind as you work through this course: “Unless the LORD builds the house, the labourers labour in vain...” Unless God by his Spirit brings about the life-change, the course won't produce what he desires.

# **Session One: MENTORING ON YOUR KNEES**



# Step 1: Prepare

Have you ever said or thought: “I can’t do anything. All I can do is pray”? So many of us do. When it comes to mentoring (or spiritual companionships), it sometimes seems as if being together, engaging in the biblical one-anothers is effective, but being separated and only being able to pray is less than the best.

Session Five challenges that idea. When we pray with an attitude of dependence, God does the work. We participate in what he is accomplishing. Whether we meet and bathe our time together in prayer, or for whatever reason, cannot meet, believing prayer is the key to lasting life-change.



## Case Study

Author and pastor, Ben Patterson tells of a time when he ruptured a disc and the doctor prescribed six weeks of total bed rest. Heavily medicated and lying flat on his back, he found reading was virtually impossible. In that state he learned an important lesson about prayer:

“I was helpless. I was also terrified. What was this all going to mean? How was I to take care of my family? What about the church? I was the only pastor it had, and I could do nothing for it. Out of sheer desperation I decided to pray for the church. I opened the church directory and prayed for each member of the congregation, daily. It took nearly two hours, but since there was nothing else I could do for the church, I figured I might as well pray for it. It was not piety that made me do it, it was boredom and frustration. But over the weeks the prayer times grew sweet. One day near the end of my convalescence, I was praying and I told the Lord, ‘You know, it’s been wonderful, these prolonged times we’ve spent together. It’s too bad I don’t have time to do this when I’m well.’

God’s answer came swift and blunt. He said to me, ‘Ben, you have just as much time when you’re well as when you are sick. It’s the same twenty-four hours in either case. The trouble with you is that when you are well, you think you’re in charge. When you’re sick, you know you’re not.’”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Yancey, *Prayer*, (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006), p. 160-161.

# Step 2: Study

Read Genesis 24:42-48

“When I came to the spring today, I said, ‘LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. See, I am standing beside this spring. If a young woman comes out to draw water and I say to her, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar,” and if she says to me, “Drink, and I’ll draw water for your camels too,” let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master’s son.’

“Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’

“She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too.’ So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

“I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’

“She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milkah bore to him.’

“Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son.”

Read Psalm 5:2-3

Hear my cry for help,  
my King and my God,  
for to you I pray.

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;  
in the morning I lay my requests before you  
and wait expectantly.

Read James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

**What do you observe in these passages?**

***(Verbs, key words, repeated words, connecting words)***

Genesis 24:42-49

Psalm 5:2-3

James 5:16

**What do these passages mean? (*Context, central truth.*)**

**How do these passages apply to your situation?**

# Step 3: Read

## **Mentoring by Praying by Rowland Forman**

One mentoring practice is foundational to all others—prayer. Pray before you meet, during your meeting, and after the scheduled meeting time. Jesus did that.

He was forever praying for his disciples. He chose them after a night of prayer (Luke 6:12), he taught them to pray (Luke 11:1–4), he prayed for them in a time of crisis (Luke 22:31–32, 40) and he focused on them in his high priestly prayer, just before he was crucified (John 17).

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### **Praying Before**

Do you pray before you meet with your mentor-friend? Too often I just proceed in my own strength (one of my bad habits!). When you remember to pray before a mentoring meeting, does the time always flow perfectly?

Sometimes it does for me, sometimes not. What does happen though is that our attitude changes. Invariably we have a sense of expectancy, looking to see what God will do. And if the time together has a touch of the divine, we pause and thank God.

**Prayer is  
not a  
“given” ... It  
is central**

Prayer is not, as some people describe it, a *given* (something routine and less important). It is central and crucial. Jesus' words in John 15:5 (ESV)—“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for **apart from me you can do nothing**,” — need to be etched into our brain.

**The first  
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practiced the  
power of**

Prayer in our day is more like a missing ingredient. In *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, Jonathan Dodson asks,

“How often do we start our day by requesting a fresh filling of the Spirit’s power for the day that lies ahead? Instead, we assume his presence and barrel forward. Instead, of starting and continuing our days in our own strength, what would it look like to fight for faith with utter dependence upon the power and direction of the Holy Spirit?”<sup>2</sup>

The first century church was different. They practiced the power of believing prayer.

To emulate the disciples in the book of Acts, before you meet with your mentor-friend, maybe pray a prayer like this:

“Heavenly Father, I know you have given my friend to me, and me to my friend. Grace us with your Presence as we meet. Lord Jesus, too often I’m like those friends who trudged on toward Emmaus, all confused.

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Dodson, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 2012, p. 92.

Open our eyes so that we are aware of you as we meet to mentor each other. Holy Spirit, activate our conversation, lead us into the truth I pray. Amen.”

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## **Praying During**

### ***Interactive Praying***

One of my mutual mentors, Stu Henderson, Pastor of The Kings Arms Church has a favourite activity for our mentoring times—going for a walk. We’ve done that often along beaches in Auckland, and along the stunningly picturesque walkway in Wellington Harbour. We share concerns quite naturally as we stride along and talk to the Lord about the matter as if he is right there. He is. And we don’t close our eyes! It feels natural to go in and out of talking with each other and with the Lord Jesus, as if we are the two disciples on the Emmaus Road after they recognized Jesus.

Most of my mentoring meetings take place in cafés. I’m conditioned to pray with my eyes closed (a helpful idea to aid concentration, but not a biblical requirement) and sometimes close them in a café regardless of what people think. Other times I keep my eyes open while praying to the Lord like when Stu and I go on our mentoring prayer walks. What you do with your eyes is not the issue. A prayerful attitude is.

Nehemiah is a great example of this. When he was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, he was unable to disguise his sadness at the mess Jerusalem was in. The king asked him why he was so sad. Nehemiah was terrified as one was not supposed to convey sadness in the presence of royalty in those days. The king asked Nehemiah what he wanted.

Right then and there he “prayed to the God of heaven” and answered the king (Nehemiah 2:1-5). I imagine Nehemiah kept his eyes open as he prayed and simply sent up an inaudible arrow-quick prayer to heaven. That’s a great option for us in any mutual mentoring meeting.

Another way to activate prayer during a mentoring session is to ask for prayer or to offer to pray. If trust has been built, share your concerns openly and ask, “Would you please pray for me now about that?” When your mentor-companion, or someone in your mentoring cluster opens up about one of their concerns, say, “Let me pray about that right now.” For most of us, initially this feels awkward. But after a while, the ebb and flow of conversation and mutual prayer feels like the most natural thing in the world.

**Mutual  
prayer feels  
like the most  
natural thing  
in the world**

The call of this first essential practice is to cultivate an interaction, not just with your mentor-friend, but with the God of heaven.

## ***Vulnerable Praying***

James calls us to pray for one another, always in the context of human brokenness. In James 3:16 he urges us to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.” First confess, then pray. In other words, as you humble yourselves before each other, you will need to pray for each other as never before.

In James 5:13–15 this half-brother of Jesus tells us it is always the right time to pray. He says, if you are in trouble, pray. If you are happy, then praise God. If you are sick, call your elders to pray with you. He describes one of the primary tasks of church elders: to pray with and for their people. The initiative in this case is with the person

who is sick, but the elders communicate in various ways that they are always available for prayer. They anoint the person with oil and offer prayers of faith, and God raises the person.

When James says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other,” I believe he is widening the circle. He’s built his case for the necessity of vulnerability in our relationships as he demonstrated in the case of the sick person and the church elders. Now he says all the believers are to confess their sins with each other and pray for each other. Confession and prayer form one mutuality command; two halves of one process to support each other.

I was 46 when attending Dallas Seminary as a student. I had been the principal of a small discipleship and missions Bible college for 14 years and was badly burned out. God put me together again in those two and a half years in seminary. A huge element in my restoration was a friendship with Rick Murphy. As mentioned in Session Four, it was when he confessed his sins that it freed me to admit my sins to him. Before that, I longed to be open and vulnerable but always talked myself out of it.

As I reflect on my reticence to confess my sins to another human being, there are some pertinent lessons for mutual mentoring, such as:

**Fellow  
believers are  
more broken,  
needy and  
imperfect  
than they let**

- Fellow believers are more broken, needy and imperfect than they let on.
- Confession to God through the mediation of Christ alone is our primary port of call.
- When deep respect and trust has been built between two Christ followers, we need to be appropriately vulnerable with each other.
- When we confess our sins to each other and pray for each other, spiritual healing (and sometimes physical) can take place as well.

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## Praying After

“I’ll pray for you!” I’ve said that hundreds of times. As I say those words, it feels so spiritual and reassuring, but it is meaningless when I neglect to pray. Here are some practical ways I’m attempting to overcome my tendency to promise to pray then promptly forget:

- I keep a journal or notebook with me and during the mentoring session, I jot down any items from our conversation that could be triggers to pray for my mentor-friend.
- When I get home, or sometimes the next day, I send an email or text that says in effect, “Here’s what I am praying for you.” The apostle Paul seemed to do that almost every time he wrote to individuals or a church). Sometimes this will include specific and personal items that arise during our time together. Other times I believe it is important to pray bigger prayers. Prayers like the one Paul prayed for the believers in Colossians 1:9-10:

**“I’ll pray for you!” ... is meaningless when I neglect to**

“We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”

As I read that incredible prayer, I realize that my prayers are often too small.

- If I know that the person I am mentoring has an important appointment coming up, I put a note in my calendar to pray for them and at times supplement that with a text to say I have been praying.

This first essential mentoring practice that may become a habit—praying before, during and after—is hinted at in Psalm 127:1.

Admittedly the Psalmist is talking about building a godly family, but the principle is transferrable and timeless: “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

As you together build this mentoring friendship, never forget that dependence on God through prayer is at the centre of spiritual mentoring. Unless you do, it could be a fleshly exercise and potentially be in vain. If you bathe your relationship in prayer, then when your relationship morphs into a spiritual friendship, all credit goes to God.

Maybe like me, your default life habit is to do things in your own strength. At least we are not on our own! Paul chided the Galatian churches for that bad habit in Galatians 3:3.

“Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”

Self-reliance is foolish and deep-seated. And deeply ingrained habits are hard to break. That’s why we need each other. Ideally, as you complete this course, you will be in a mentor-partnership with another person, or in a mentoring cluster. If you are convinced that you need to bathe your mentoring relationships in prayer, commit to engaging in this first habit and

**Dependence on God through prayer is at the center of spiritual mentoring**

keeping each other gently accountable. I say “gently” because there are few things more exhausting than an intensely legalistic check-up session.

Maybe on the day of your next meeting, text each other with the pray-before-during-after reminder? When you meet, try introducing the Lord into your conversation, however awkward it feels at first. He is with you. Then after you have met, send a text or an email with a “Here’s what I am praying for you” message.

# Step 4: Discuss & Apply

1. What are the main lessons you learned from the case study about Ben Patterson?
2. How do the three scripture passages on prayer relate to the topic of mentoring on our knees?
3. Why is it important to pray before, during and after we meet as spiritual companions? What if we miss one of those out?

4. How does this lesson relate to the times when you simply cannot meet with a mentor-friend?
5. What do you sense the Holy Spirit is saying to you from this fifth lesson?
6. What action steps do you plan to take?

# **Session Two: QUESTIONS BEFORE ANSWERS**



# Step 1: Prepare

Mentoring by using questions is more than just a good idea. It was the way the Master Mentor, our Lord Jesus Christ shaped the thinking and lives of his disciples. He often followed one question with several others. The first part of this booklet is a call to emulate him by asking and listening before we teach and tell.

The art of skilful questioning does open a person up, but it is not presented in the belief that there is innate goodness in each individual. Rather it accepts that we are broken and can make people reflect and orient themselves to God's thoughts contained in the Scriptures.



## Case Study

Joseph was a very successful businessman. When I stepped into his large office he was very welcoming. On his office shelves were copies of three books he had written. I settled into a comfortable chair and after some ‘getting acquainted’ questions, I asked him, “How did you manage to do so well in business?”

Joseph answered without a pause, “I’m the answer-man. I’ve built my whole career on being the person people go to for answers. That’s what people want.”

I said, “That might be true, but how can you get the best answers without really good questions?”

Joseph replied, “The question I always keep in mind is, ‘How can I prove I’m right?’”

I could hardly believe what I had heard, so I followed up with two questions: “How might your team feel when you insist that you are right?”

He said, “I think that’s what they want. They want to know where we are going and how to get there.”

My second question got a different response. I asked, “How does your approach of proving you are right work at home and with your wife?”

He went very quiet. “It seems to work in business, but not at home.”

# Step 2: Study

Read John 21:15-19

“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?”

He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by

which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” ”

**What do you observe in this passage?**

***(Verbs, key words, repeated words, connecting words)***

**What does this passage mean? *(Context, central truth)***

**How does this passage apply to your situation?**

# Step 3: Read

## **Mentoring with Questions** **by Rowland Forman**

One thing that reveals an unselfish listening attitude in a mentoring relationship is when our default setting is to ask questions rather than give answers. The Master Mentor, Jesus, exemplified that. Sometimes he would follow someone's question with yet another of his own. For example, when the Pharisees quizzed Jesus on paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus followed their question with several of his own:

“Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” (Matthew 22:17-20)

On other occasions, Jesus employed questions to probe a little deeper into the lives of his followers. Consider this sample:

- You of little faith, why are you so afraid?
- Why do you worry?
- Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?
- Who do you say that I am?
- Who was the neighbor?
- Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
- What do you want me to do for you?
- Do you want to get well?
- Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?

**You can  
learn to  
be a good  
listener**

Even if you are a born answer-giver, you can learn to be a good listener. And if you are relatively unskilled in the art of posing perceptive questions, you can develop that skill.

How do you hone your asking skills as you aim to go from poor, to good, to great, as a mutual mentor?

Journalism's "Five 'W's and an 'H'" are a good place to start: Why? Who? Where? What? When? and How? But there's something a bit mechanical about merely applying those in a mentoring relationship. Here are three things I have learned as I seek to become a more skillful questioner: ask generally, ask specifically, and ask perceptively.

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## **Asking Generally**

A few years ago, I had the privilege of interviewing John Mallison in Sydney, Australia. He had just retired after many years as a mentor and author. I had a video crew ready to record our interview, but before the video shoot, John and I had coffee together. I asked him what he had learned about the art of asking questions. He said, "Oh, my approach is really simple. I just ask, 'How are you doing?'" John follows that very general question up (if necessary) with, "How are you doing emotionally?", "How are you doing spiritually?" or "How are you doing physically?" Then based on how the person answers, he asks other questions.

**I want to  
probe, not  
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person  
has done,  
but how  
they really**

I've employed that simple approach again and again. Occasionally I throw in a twist to that general question, "How are you being?"

(which usually elicits a smile). In other words, I want to probe, not what the person has done, but how they really are.

The risen Lord Jesus asked a couple of general questions when he strolled alongside two of his confused disciples on the Emmaus Road. He asked, “What are you discussing together?” and when they quizzically replied, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened here in these days?” rather than answering them, he asked a second general question: “What things?” (see Luke 24:17-19).

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## Asking Specifically

As you get to know each other, come ready to ask questions that relate to where the person is up to at that stage of their spiritual

**Come  
ready  
to ask  
questions  
that relate  
to where  
the person**

pilgrimage. Jesus did that. In John 21, when Jesus prepared breakfast on the beach for his disciples, three times over, he asked variations of the question, Do you love me more than these? (John 21:15-17)

While that sounds like a closed question that merely needed a yes or no answer, it was a very pointed question when you think of the events prior to Jesus’ crucifixion. When Jesus announced he was on the way to be crucified, Peter proffered his undying love to Jesus. All the other eleven disciples might desert Jesus, but not him. Jesus predicted that before a rooster crowed twice, Peter would deny him three times.

Tragically that came true. Now during breakfast on the beach, Jesus’ three questions mirrored Peter’s three denials and probed the extent of Peter’s love. Questions like that require insight and deep trust.

As you develop the ability to ask intuitive and appropriate questions, it's also helpful to access, or memorize a series of questions that fit your situation. Keith Farmer suggests these questions:

- ***Spirituality:*** “How are you and God doing?”
- ***Relationships:*** “How are you doing with those closest to you?”
- ***Emotions:*** “How are you doing emotionally?”
- ***Rhythms:*** “What rhythms have you established that will help you live well?”
- ***Vulnerabilities:*** “If Satan was to take you out, how would he be likely to do it?”<sup>3</sup>

When I prepare for my next mentoring meeting, I pray and then gather questions such as the ones above. I keep the questions in mind but hold them very loosely. I've tried the list of 20 accountability questions that ends up with the question that always gets a laugh: “Have you been lying to me?” The approach of laboriously going through a long list of questions seems a bit too much like an interrogation. A more important task is to develop the art and skill of probing questions.

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## Asking Perceptively

Knowing each other, regardless of your group size, is of the essence, and preparing questions beforehand, or having a stock of prepared

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 1: “Surprised by Pain” by Keith Farmer in Rick Lewis, *Mentoring Matters* (Oxford, England: Monarch Books, 2009), 223-240.

questions is a great way to develop the skill of questioning in your mentoring relationship. However, both of those approaches can become a bit mechanical. A third way to approach the questioning process is to simply depend on the Holy Spirit to lead you. This harmonizes with the concept of praying before, during and after your mentoring session in Session Five.

**Simply  
depend  
on the  
Holy Spirit  
to lead**

According to the Lord Jesus, one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into all truth. We need to seek the Spirit's guidance before we meet on which questions to ask, or to ask him to prompt us when we meet to ask perceptive questions.

Developing the skill of asking good questions calls firstly for the right attitude: we need to be genuinely interested in the other person or persons, probing to find out more about them, and asking questions to help them clarify their own thinking. Secondly, we can hone our ability to ask questions by utilizing general and specific questions—to use intuitively or purposefully. Thirdly, we will develop this skill as we humbly ask the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Why mentor with questions? One huge benefit is that it orients you to the other person, and in the process slows you down to listen. In mentoring relationships, so many of us have what John Ortberg calls “hurry sickness,” and are more answer-givers than attentive listeners.

A friend once asked Isidor I. Rabi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner in science, how he became a scientist. Rabi replied that every day after school his mother would talk to him about his school day. She wasn't so much interested in what he had learned that day, but she always inquired, “Did you ask a good question today?”

“Asking good questions,” according to Isidor Rabi, “made me a scientist.” Based on the example of the Lord Jesus with his Twelve, asking good questions made them better disciples.

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## **Mentoring Questions**

Here are some questions that will help you become a better listener: Consider using the following list of Mentoring Questions—maybe even memorizing them at the start of your journey toward becoming a better listener. Once you are familiar with them, you will know intuitively which ones to ask.

### ***1. Ask Generally***

- How are you doing?
- How are you doing—really?
- How is your soul?
- Would you like to tell me more?

### ***2. Ask Specifically<sup>4</sup>***

- How are you doing spiritually?
  - How connected are you to Christ?
  - How connected are you to God’s Word?
  - How would you describe your prayer life at present?
  - How would you describe a time when you felt especially close to God?
- How are you doing relationally?
  - How would your spouse/closest friend describe your relationship with them?
  - How would your children describe your relationship with them?

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<sup>4</sup> Follow up any of the Basic Questions with what some call the 5 W’s and an H—Why? When? Where? What? Who? and How? questions where appropriate.

- How would those you work with describe your relationship with them?
- Who are your replenishing friends?
- How are you doing physically?
  - What is your level of fitness at present?
  - What physical concerns do you have?
  - To what extent do you have adequate rest?
  - To what extent have you been overly tired or fatigued in the last month?
- How are you doing emotionally?
  - How would those closest to you describe your emotional state?
  - To what extent do you mask your real emotions?
  - To what extent do you feel discouraged or disillusioned?
- How are you doing with life's rhythms?
  - How would you describe your daily rhythm?
  - What is your weekly rhythm—relating to six days of work and one of rest?
  - What is your annual rhythm relating to vacations?
- What are your vulnerabilities?
  - If Satan was to “take you out” how would he possibly do it?

# Step 4: Discuss & Apply

Introduction: Share steps you have taken as you have prayerfully applied Book 2: Session One.

1. What are the main lessons you learned from the Case Study about Joseph, the businessman?
2. How does Jesus' interaction with Peter in John 17:15-19 demonstrate the art of asking good questions?
3. What is the difference between a good question and a poor one?

4. In a mentoring relationship, what are the main advantages of asking questions before providing answers?
5. In a mentoring interaction, after you have asked several questions, how do you know when it is the right time to provide wise advice?
6. What do you sense the Holy Spirit is saying to you from this first lesson in Book Two?
7. What action steps do you plan to take as a result of this lesson?

# **Session Three:**

## **LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT AND EACH OTHER**



# Step 1: Prepare

To each of the seven churches in Asia Minor that received a letter from the Lord Jesus (Revelation 2 & 3), he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This highlights the possibility of having ears but not really listening. That was true of churches in the First Century—failing to really listen to what the Holy Spirit was saying to us through Scripture.

If that is true of churches, it is also true of individuals in churches. We need to cultivate a listening ear to what the Spirit is putting his finger on in our lives. Daily, as we come to God’s Word we need to ask, “What are you saying to me?” The Scriptures are the primary source we need to attend to, but in our spiritual companionships we also need to listen to what the Spirit may be saying to us through each other.

This session explores the primary importance of listening to the Holy Spirit through God’s Word and through people we meet.



## Case Study

Last week, Coach Stephen, in his role as a trainer of mentors, taught his eager group of five about the importance of asking questions and listening keenly to their spiritual companions. He finished the last lesson with the challenge to resist giving answers and instead, try to really listen. He asked them during their mentoring session, to think over the following week about how much listening and how much talking they did.

A week later, the group met in a small comfortable room and after prayer for each other, Stephen asked each trainee to give an approximate percentage on how much talking they did and how much listening.

Brad said his time with his mentor-friend that week went quite well. He said that he probably talked 70% of the time and listened for 30%. The Coach asked why. Brad said, “I’ve always been a teacher-type. I love giving answers.” Then he added, “I have an opinion on almost everything.” The group laughed. The other reason he gave for his percentages was that his mentor-friend was a person of few words. It was hard to get him talking.

Sally said she had the opposite problem. The person she met with would hardly stop talking – even for her to slip in a question. “I listened for 98% of the time and talked for 2%!” she said, which made the group laugh again.

**If you were Coach Stephen, what advice would you give to Brad and Sally?**

# Step 2: Study

## **Read Proverbs 13:3**

Those who guard their lips preserve their lives,  
but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.

## **Read Proverbs 19:20**

Listen to advice and accept discipline,  
and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

## **Read Proverbs 25:12**

Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold  
is the rebuke of a wise judge to a listening ear.

## **Read Revelation 2:7 (also 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6, 3:13, 3:22)**

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

**What do you observe in these passages?**

**(Verbs, key words, repeated words, connecting words)**

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 19:20

Proverbs 25:12

Revelation 2:7 (also 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6, 3:13, 3:22)

**What do these passages mean? (Context, central truth)**

**How do these passages apply to your situation?**

# Step 3: Read

## **Ears to Listen by Rowland Forman**

Learning to listen well is essential for effective transformational mentoring. And self-awareness is a great starting place. I know that I am naturally more of a teacher; more of an advice-giver than a listener. What about you? Are you more of a talker or a listener? When you are in a small group setting, are you quick to offer your opinion? Or do you tend to hang back and listen, then say something profound (well, maybe just helpful)?

**Are you  
more of  
talker than  
listener;  
or listener  
than**

I've had to learn and hone the skill of listening. Nothing gives me more pleasure as a mentor than to hear someone say, "Thank you. You really listened to me."

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## **Listening Attentively**

Healthy mentoring relationships require active reciprocal listening. Listening is much more than a passive, "I speak, you listen; you speak, I listen" routine. It calls for us to be actively present with each other. In *A Generous Presence*, Rochelle Melander says that ideally, a fully engaged listener communicates some of the following attitudes:

- **“I am fully present with you.”** Melander describes this as being “fiercely attentive.” The listener dismisses as many distractions as possible.
- **“I care about you.”** The listener sets aside his or her time and enters into our world.
- **“I accept you.”** The attentive listener exudes warmth and welcomes the other person just as they are.
- **“Is this what you are saying?”** An attentive listener asks for clarification with a view to deeper understanding.
- **“I understand.”** The listener is more interested in understanding us than in being understood.<sup>5</sup>

The reality though is that our world is full of internal and external distractions:

### ***Internal***

- Your mind wanders to your work or whatever you were doing before meeting.
- What the person says reminds you of something you need to do.
- Multitasking.
- Listening with an agenda.
- You hear what the person says and are already marshaling your answers or formulating the next question.

### ***External***

- Your mobile phone is on and although you have it on mute, it vibrates and your curiosity gets the better of you.
- There are intriguing things going on in the café where you meet.
- You watch the clock.
- You are sitting at your work desk and your mind goes in a hundred directions.

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<sup>5</sup> Rochelle Melander, *A Generous Presence*, (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 97.

I'm convinced that listening is a discipline that can be learned. And that discipline starts with self-awareness. What are some internal and external factors that really distract you? In the Mary and Martha story (Luke 10:38–42), if you asked that of Martha after her interaction with Jesus, she may have said, “Much serving. I get so involved in doing that I neglect to listen.”

**I'm  
convinced  
that  
listening is a  
discipline**

In my role as a mentor coach, I ask mentor trainees to give me an approximate percentage of how much listening and how much talking they did during a mentoring session. Invariably they talk more than they listen. My challenge is to change that next time. What about you? Are you more of a talker than a listener? To engage in the discipline of listening, this next week, try to just listen to people. Resist the desire to give your opinion. I know it will feel a bit contrived and awkward, but you will be training yourself to listen.

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## **Listening Humbly**

**A person  
with  
a listening  
ear is  
essentially**

Listening with a view to understanding requires humility. It is firstly a heart attitude that says, in effect, “I’m here to listen to you and what God might be saying to me through you.” Advice-giving has its place in the mentoring relationship, but listening attentively is another way of implementing Paul’s instructions in Philippians 2:3b–4:

“In humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

A person with a listening ear is essentially others-oriented. It amounts to putting a brake on whenever you are tempted to dish out advice. The words of the teacher in Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 about the best heart attitude when we go into the house of God ring true for transformational mentoring relationships as well:

“Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.”

In this passage, the teacher is concerned with how worshippers listen but also with how they speak. They are to approach God with a listening ear, eager to hear his Word. They are also to be slow to make rash promises in God’s presence. The principle is the same when we come to a mentoring friendship: be eager to listen and slow to speak.

**Be  
eager  
to listen  
and**

There was a period in my marriage when I was on serious overload in life and ministry. I was the Principal of the GLO Bible College at the time, as well as National Director of Gospel Literature Outreach (GLO). I had been asked to give a plenary address at the GLO International Conference in London. The day before I left for a three-week speaking tour, I met Elaine after work and could tell that something was amiss.

I asked, “What’s wrong?”

She replied, “Nothing,” (which meant there was trouble brewing).

When I pressed that point she said, “It’s not worth telling you—you never listen.” Something happened in me that day. Usually I would

have been my own attorney. I would have dissected the phrase, “you never listen” focusing on the word “never.”

That day though, all I said was, “I really want to listen.” And that’s all I did. No justification of my inattentiveness. No springing to my own defense. And when Elaine explained her feelings I merely said, “Tell me more.” That day I uncovered the power of humble listening. Our marriage has been better ever since.

Humble listening will be a challenge if you are an answer-giver (like me). There is a time for that, but in most mentor meetings, listening begins with turning off the flow of answers.

God is our example when it comes to listening. The book of Job demonstrates that. The godly patriarch Job experiences unrelenting tragedy: the death of his sons and daughters, excruciating sores all over his body, and “friends” who increase his agony by suggesting that he must have sinned to be suffering so much. Initially Job dealt with tragedy and suffering well—he praised Yahweh, but his friends ground him down. As the emotional and physical pain got the better of him, he told God exactly what he thought of him.

According to the book of Job, God just listened (chapter 3 through 37). No answers. There’s no doubt God could have told Job about the cosmic council with Satan (chapter 1 and 2) and lots more. Yet, even when Yahweh spoke, essentially all he did was to ask questions such as, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” (Job 38:4)

Wisely, after God’s interrogation, Job says, “I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.” (Job 40:4) If we are to emulate God in our mentoring relationships, we need to humbly listen as our first instinct.

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## Listening Spiritually

Skillful mentors listen deeply and humbly to each other. But if spiritual transformation is to take place, they also listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying through each other. It amounts to being more taken up with the concerns of others and with God's agenda rather than our own. Anderson and Reese put it this way:

“Mentoring is not about telling. It is about listening—to the Holy Spirit and to the life of the other. . . . It is true that there are times of instructing, guiding and sharing wisdom, but mentoring is primarily about discernment and learning to recognize where God is already present and active in the heart of the other.”<sup>6</sup>

**Mentoring  
is not  
about  
telling.  
It is about  
listening —  
to the Holy  
Spirit and  
to the life**

Spiritual listening amounts to asking the question: “What might the Holy Spirit be saying to me and to us?” According to Jesus’ letters to the seven churches of Asia, church leaders need to ask, “What is the Spirit saying to our church?” In every one of Jesus’ letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 he says, “He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Similarly, in our mentoring pairs or huddles, we need to become detectives of what the Spirit may be whispering to us. How do we hear from the Holy Spirit in our mutual mentoring partnerships?

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<sup>6</sup> Keith Anderson and Randy Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 28.

## **Ask**

First, we need to ask for his help. James says, “You do not have, because you do not ask God,” (James 4:2) and I’m sure that is true of listening to the Spirit. Before you meet, ask God to speak to you both by his Spirit (or to your mentoring huddle), and maybe during your meeting, pause and express your desire to hear from him. After your mentoring session, ask the Lord, “What were you saying?”

**We need to  
become  
detectives  
of what the  
Spirit may  
be  
whispering**

Those prayers before, during and after convey an open heart — a willingness to listen and respond, akin to Samuel’s words, “Speak LORD for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9). The Samuel story is instructive because the young apprentice to Eli initially didn’t realize God was speaking. That’s so like me. I’m often quick to speak and slow to listen to the Spirit. How about you?

## **Reflect**

Second, we need to reflect. The words of Ecclesiastes 4:9 are true here: “Two are better than one.” I’ve been through several phases in this quest to listen to what the Spirit may be saying in my mentoring relationships.

For years, I had a general desire to listen to the Spirit, but wasn’t comfortable to claim that the Spirit had spoken. Then one day while mentoring Allan, I asked him to send me an email with anything that he sensed the Spirit might be saying to him from our mentoring meeting. His response blew me away by capturing so much of our time together.

Allan’s email showed me the power of an open heart and reflective spirit. Now, in most of my mentoring partnerships or huddles, we

send each other emails that try to capture what the Spirit may have said to us individually, to the other person, and occasionally what the Spirit has said to us as a unit.

## ***Obey***

Third, we need to obey what the Spirit has said. As we obey his promptings — always and only in harmony with the Scriptures — he will reveal more and transform us in the process.

We come then to our mentoring relationships with a dependent attitude. We bathe the process in prayer. Then we meet (and linger) unselfishly and generously in the life of a person God has “given” us. When we meet, our primary approach as we linger is to listen intently to them, and to what the Holy Spirit is saying through them.

# Step 4: Discuss & Apply

Introduction: Share steps you have taken as you have prayerfully applied Book 2, Session Two.

1. What are the main lessons you learned from the case study about Coach Stephen, and Brad and Sally's answers?
2. What are the main truths you gained from studying the Scripture passages about listening?
3. Why is it so difficult to listen with a view to really understanding the person or people you are mentoring?



4. What are some practical ways you have learned to listen to the Holy Spirit in ministry or during a mentoring meeting?
5. What do you sense the Holy Spirit is saying to you from this second lesson in Book Two?
6. What action steps do you plan to take?

# **Session Four:**

## **PRACTICING**

## **ENCOURAGEMENT**



# Step 1: Prepare

When you consider your family and ministry, where would you place yourself on an “Encourager—Corrector” scale? Do you catch yourself correcting people more than encouraging them?

This session explores the life-changing power of affirmation in a mentoring relationship. Make it a goal in this lesson to become more like the biblical character, Barnabas. His birth name was Joseph, but he was so affirming that people called him “Mr. Encouragement.”



## Case Study

I don't recall my Scottish dad doing chores of any note around the house. That was left to my mother (or us kids). So, soon after my wife and I were married, I thought I'd pull all the stops out and vacuum the entire house. She arrived home, and I was waiting for accolades. I waited until I could stand it no longer and said, "Did you notice anything?"

She replied, "No."

I mentioned my herculean task. To my disappointment all she said was, "Oh good." When we discussed this episode later, I found that her Irish dad often joined in on household chores. He wasn't so good at affirmation however, or doing more romantic things like giving flowers. I learned early on that my wife's love languages are words of affirmation, well-chosen gifts, and spending significant uninterrupted time with her.<sup>7</sup>

My hunch is that we all have "encouragement languages" as well.

What is your encouragement language? What might the encouragement language of your mentor-friend be?

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<sup>7</sup> According to Gary Chapman, in his book *The Five Love Languages*, significant ways to express love in a marriage relationship are: quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service physical touch and words of affirmation.

# Step 2: Study

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Read Hebrews 3:12-13

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

**What do you observe in these passages?**

***(Verbs, key words, repeated words, connecting words)***

1 Thessalonians 5:8-11

Hebrews 3:12-13

**What do these passages mean? (*Context, central truth.*)**

**How do these passages apply to your situation?**

# Step 3: Read

## The Power of Affirmation by Rowland Forman

Some people are born encouragers (or have that spiritual gift according to Romans 12:8). Most of us mere mortals have to work at it. All Christ followers, according to passages like Hebrews 3:13 listed above, are required to encourage each other—and in your quest to become a more effective mentor, this is a primary skill. What about you? Do you see yourself as an encourager? How do others perceive you?

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### Affirming Repeatedly

I love the title of one of the chapters in Johnson and Ridley's book, *The Elements of Mentoring*: "Affirm, Affirm, Affirm and Then Affirm Some More."<sup>8</sup> That resonated with me because I'm certain all of us need encouragement.

I know I do.

Hebrews 3:13 says, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." That means day by day by day we need to encourage each other and never give up.

**One kind  
word can  
warm up  
three  
winters**

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson and Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring*, (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 9-11.

This verse also gives us one solid reason for unremitting affirmation: our hearts can easily become calloused by sin. It's as if a well-chosen word of affirmation can keep our hearts soft toward God. To put it another way, "One kind word can warm up three winters," according to a Japanese proverb.

I know that's true. In my case, one kind word has warmed up 20 winters. When I was leaving Dallas Seminary in 1991, one of my professors, Dr. Howard Hendricks, gave me a book he had written (*Living by the Book*) and wrote words of affirmation on the first page:

"What a delight that the Lord caused our paths to cross. There is nothing with which I resonate more than your vision for New Zealand. Praying that God will give you grace and wisdom in implanting your burden for developing quality leadership. Thanks for being you! Isaiah 54:17."

From time to time, when I feel discouraged, I pull the book off my shelves, soak in his kind words, and am ready to go on.

**We need  
encouragement  
but we  
can't require**

Howie (as we affectionately called him) indelibly marked me because I so often descend into sinful thought patterns. I'm not talking about blatant disobedience, rather, negative (often stupid) thought patterns such as, "If only people knew me as I am, they would never bother with me," or "I feel like quitting, my life doesn't amount to much." Negative thoughts like that plague me. My hunch is I'm not alone in that. That negative tendency reminds me why I need to affirm, affirm and then affirm some more.

We need encouragement but we can't require it. It feels hollow when we solicit affirmation. I believe it's better to take responsibility for

being a better encourager and leave the need for encouragement to God.

**Imagine if  
...  
meaningful  
affirmation**

Imagine if mentoring relationships were constant, and meaningful affirmation was the norm. When we meet, one of our instinctive questions should be, “How can I affirm fellow mentor-friends today?” Try to fold that question into your mentoring mindset in the next month.

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## **Affirming Significantly**

Recently, a book found me, called *Practicing Affirmation: God-Centered Praise of Those Who Are Not God*, by Sam Crabtree.<sup>9</sup> It has given me a new perspective on the art of affirmation. Here are some lessons (among many) I have learned from his book:

### ***Affirming God-like Qualities***

In the past, most of my affirming words have amounted to variations of “Good job!” That’s not insignificant—it is worthwhile to catch someone doing something well, and then tell them how much it has blessed you. Crabtree’s call though, is to affirm God-like qualities. A primary biblical narrative is that God originally made us in his image, and tragically, because of the “fall” that image has been defaced but not erased. However, through Christ, the image of God is being restored but is not completed until we get to heaven.

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<sup>9</sup> Sam Crabtree, *Practicing Affirmation: God-Centered Praise of Those Who Are Not God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011).

**Instead of just saying, “Good job,” affirm the God-like quality in them**

God-centered affirmation amounts to spotting the image of God in people, however imperfect it may be. I did that recently with my hairdresser/barber (not that I have much hair to dress!). When I was about to pay, I said, “When I leave your salon, I always feel happy. You are a very joyful person.” She looked at me with a tear in her eye and said, “No one has ever said that to me. Thank you.” Next time you spot one of your friends speaking truth, showing great courage, or being incredibly kind to someone, instead of just saying, “Good job,” affirm the specific God-like quality in them.

That’s what the man in Jesus’ parable about the talents did (Matthew 25:14–30). He said to the servants who invested their talents (money), “Well done, good and faithful servant!” They had done a good job, but it was the God-like qualities of goodness and faithfulness that he affirmed.

There are attributes of God that we can delight in but never emulate. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and sovereign. We will never be. However, God’s moral attributes, such as: truth, kindness, love, grace, and holiness, can all become categories for affirmation of one another. We can always affirm and delight in God for all that he is. Delighting in God is the most transformative experience we can ever engage in.

***Put Deposits in Your Relational Bank***

Think of the last time you met with your mentor-friend or mentoring cluster. What proportion of your interaction was encouragement and how much was correction in one form or another? Words of encouragement are like deposits in your relational checking account. Corrections are withdrawals.

**Words of  
encouragement  
are like deposits  
in your  
relational**

### ***Discover Each Other's Encouragement Language***

Just as there are love languages in marriage, such as those described by Gary Chapman in *The Five Love Languages* (quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service physical touch and words of affirmation), I believe there are encouragement languages in mentoring. Here are some of mine:

- Positive comments about my character.
- Small meaningful gifts.
- Unsolicited praise.
- It sounds insane, but almost any word of encouragement (even if it only amounts to “Well done!”) from someone whom I respect deeply, helps keep me going.

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### **Affirming Promptly**

Romans 12:8a says: “If it [your gift] is to encourage, then give encouragement.” Those with that gift are to practice it unrelentingly. Those of us without that gift are not off the hook. Meditate on this selection of Scriptures:

“Therefore encourage one another with these words”  
(1 Thessalonians 4:18).

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

“And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

Most of us nod in agreement when we read those Scriptures, yet my hunch is that many of us have difficulty practicing continual encouragement. Why is that?

One way to make sure that we practice affirmation is simply to do it right away. That means when you meet as mutual mentors, actively think of ways to encourage each other, and when the Spirit prompts you, say it right away. Don't wait for a more appropriate moment. It may never arrive. Similarly, when you are prompted to give encouragement and the person isn't physically with you, you should still try to affirm them right away.

**When  
the Spirit  
prompts  
you, say it  
right away**

John Maxwell tells about a time he visited his father Melvin in 2004. John needed a quiet spot for a conference call, so his dad let him use his office. As he sat at the desk, he noticed a card right next to the phone, with these words in his father's handwriting:

- #1     Build people up by encouragement.
- #2     Give people credit by acknowledgement.

### #3 Give people recognition by gratitude.<sup>10</sup>

Those words were a reminder to encourage people right then and there. Don't let the moment pass if you know you should say appropriate words of affirmation. Here are some practical suggestions on ways to encourage your mentor-friends:

- When you see a God-like character quality in someone, tell them then and there. Don't wait for the perfect moment.
- Review what the person means to you. Compose an email that affirms their Christ-like quality.
- Choose or make a card and write it out in your own hand. Strange, but I've found that nowadays a handwritten card can be more impactful than an email.
- When you get to your car after a mentor-meeting, take a couple of minutes to compose an encouraging text.
- Next time you meet, have a gift such as a book you have bought for your friend and do the Howie Hendricks thing: write words of encouragement in the flyleaf.
- Think of something practical you can do for your mentor-friend, such as recommending them to a prospective employer. Don't just do it, tell them that this is just another way of showing what they mean to you.
- Email or text them with a prayer you are praying for them. My mentor-friend Earl Lindgren signs off his emails with: "Look for the best, not the worst. Look for all you can praise God for and be glad about."

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<sup>10</sup> John Maxwell, *Mentoring 101* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 56.

- Stop and pray now, asking God to change you to be more affirming.
- Ask your mentor-friend what their encouragement languages are.
- Ask God to make you as (wise, kind, faithful, enthusiastic, etc) as someone you know who excels at that quality. Then tell that person you are praying that way.

There are people out there — maybe your mentor-partners — who won't make it, unless you affirm, affirm, affirm, then affirm some more.

# Step 4: Discuss & Apply

Introduction: Share steps you have taken as you have prayerfully applied Book 2, Session Three.

1. What are the main lessons you learned from the Case Study about encouragement languages?
2. What are the main truths you gained from studying the Scripture passages about encouragement?
3. Why is it so difficult to give encouragement?

4. Why do people need affirmation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What do you sense the Holy Spirit is saying to you from this third lesson in Book Two?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What action steps do you plan to take?

# **Session Five:**

# **THEY DON'T BELONG**

# **TO YOU**



# Step 1: Prepare

If, by God's grace you have been applying (however well or imperfectly) the various lessons in this *Life-Changing Companions* course, pause for a moment and spend time in grateful prayer.

However, once you have been in a spiritual mentoring relationship for an extended time, there are a few pitfalls to keep in mind. This lesson explores how to recognise when it may be time to move on from a long-term relationship. At times our spiritual companionships can become possessive. It's not that we intend to shut other people out; rather we enjoy the company of the other person, and find security in that.

Lesson Five is about the skill of releasing our grasp on the people that God by his Spirit has given us.



## Case Study

One of the ways Pastor Zack tries to stay fresh in Christian ministry is by reading uplifting and thought-provoking books. His latest one is *Pastoral Grit* by Craig Brian Larson. The illustration that most captured his attention was of Christian people on inflatable tire tubes flowing down a mighty river.

From time to time, some of the people on the tubes clustered together in threes or fours, sometimes groups of up to 20 or 30 formed. Then people flowed on and linked up with other groups.

The objective didn't seem to be who had the biggest number of people together on the tubes. Rather, it seemed to be all about the interchange between the people for as long as they were linked, and allowing the life of Christ to flow from one to the other.

1. What do you like about the word picture of people flowing along a river on inflatable tubes?
2. What are the weaknesses of this illustration?

# Step 2: Study

## **Read Colossians 4:7-9**

Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

## **Read Colossians 4:17**

Tell Archippus: “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.”

## **Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2**

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

### **What do you observe in these passages?**

***(Verbs, key words, repeated words, connecting words)***

Colossians 4:7-9

Colossians 4:17

2 Timothy 2:1-2

**What do these passages mean? (*Context, central truth.*)**

**How do these passages apply to your situation?**

# Step 3: Read

## **Moving On and Multiplying by Rowland Forman**

There comes a stage in every mentoring relationship when it is time to move on. And a philosophy of multiplication requires that we do. We need to find a way to release each other to God, to recognize that spiritual transformation is God's work and not ours, to hold our God-given mentoring relationships with an open hand, and to look for other people that the Lord of the church has put into our orbit.

**We need to  
find a way  
to release  
each other  
to God**

It is common to settle into a long-term mentoring relationship and be unaware of possessive attitudes. Here are three guidelines to keep in mind so that our mentor-friendships don't become toxic:

1. Beware of anyone who talks about "my disciple."
2. Be open to times of intensive learning, but let the relationship be more fluid than possessive.
3. Adopt a team approach to mentoring.

We need to adopt the lifelong practice of releasing each other to God; to release spiritually, open-handedly and generously.

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## Releasing Spiritually: This is Christ's Ministry, Not Yours

We need to relinquish our grip on each other and realize that our focus needs to be on Christ, not on ourselves. During our mutual mentoring times together, and as we eventually move on from each other, we need to depend totally on the Lord Jesus. Apart from him, we amount to nothing and achieve nothing. We must release any unhealthy grip we have on each other.

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## Releasing Open-handedly: They Don't Belong to You

We all have our limits in terms of the number of meaningful mentoring relationships we can sustain. Ever since I read Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton's seminal book on mentoring, *Connecting: Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*,<sup>11</sup> I've adopted three of their categories on effective mentoring:

1. **Intensive.** There is a time and need for very regular and intentional input into each other.
2. **Occasional.** Often after an extended "intensive" period in my mentoring relationships, we slip into an occasional, as-needed routine. The beauty of this is that it leaves us with open hands for others.
3. **Lifelong.** I have a few friends that have been with me for life. We have mentored each other in-depth for long stretches. We have

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton, *Connecting: Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1992).

moved on, but most importantly we always know we are there for each other.

In addition to using these, I add a fourth:

4. ***As needed.*** If you choose to adopt the framework, based loosely on how Jesus mentored people—“Who are the people God has placed in my relational network?” “Who are the 12?” “Who are the 3?” “Who is the one?”—it’s unlikely that you can care equally for all of them (unless you have unusual capacity). You could minister in-depth to 1, 3 or maybe even 12. I find the “as needed” category releases me from overload. The people that I am no longer working intensively with know that if something happens that calls for more regular input, then we are there for each other.
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## **Releasing Generously: Introduce Them to Others**

In this life stage, I sometimes jokingly refer to myself as a spiritual broker - unpaid! I have the huge privilege of making connections for people in ministry; helping them access other mentors that will take them much further than I can.

This final mentoring skill, “Releasing,” is about letting go, releasing our grip on each other and allowing the Lord of the church to take over. As we pray, then meet, we realize that this is Jesus’ ministry. He has gone ahead of us, and he is there with us as we meet. And as we do, like the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, our hearts burn with love for him. When we do meet to listen and question each other, we relinquish the reins; we freely admit that we simply cannot do the work of transformation. We lay our mentoring ministry down at the foot of the cross.

I subscribe to what Joey O'Connor calls “broken wholeness.”<sup>12</sup> We are all in various stages of brokenness and wholeness. There are periods in our lives when we don’t have it all together. This brings us to the end of ourselves. Then there are other seasons when God puts the broken pieces together and we live into all we were meant to be in Christ. Learning to become a transformational mutual mentor is not a tidy experience.

**We are all in various stages of brokenness and**

Take, for example Session Five in Book One: **Praying**—Pray before, during and after. Which of us would claim to have graduated from the School of Prayer? Not me anyway. Sometimes God graces me with a dependent spirit for several days in a row. Other times, it’s almost as if I have never learned—I carry on in my own strength. I take great comfort in the thought that our heavenly Father is like the “prodigal son’s” father (Luke 15:11–24). When he sees me take even a few steps in the right direction, he comes running with open arms.

Sometimes I meet wholly to **listen** and learn from my fellow mentor(s); sometimes I’m rather distracted. I have learned that as long as my mentor-partners know that my heart is toward them, they will be patient with me. There are mentoring sessions when the questions I **ask** have a touch of divine wisdom about them, at other times I feel like a slow learner in the art of questioning.

At times I remember to **affirm**, affirm, then affirm some more. But I occasionally retreat into a more self-centred approach to life and forget to encourage the people in my mentoring network. There are times when my attempts at **admonishing** and teaching have a sense

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<sup>12</sup> Joey O'Connor, *The Longing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2004). See Chapter 6: “Broken Wholeness.”

of divine timing about them, while on other occasions they are a bit clumsy.

This course is written for women and men who want to invest more deeply in the lives of other individuals by forming intentional spiritual friendships. I pray that this goal has been reached—that you are informed, inspired and motivated to take the next step. It is also written for church leaders who long to see Spirit-orchestrated mentoring friendships become the norm throughout their church. Individual-to-individual as well as church-wide mentoring both require intentionality—a passion and a plan.

**Watch the  
Spirit  
transform us  
to become  
more like**

Join in and see what God will do, individually or collectively, as we mutually mentor each other and then watch the Spirit transform us to become more like the Lord Jesus.

# Step 4: Discuss & Apply

Introduction: Share steps you have taken as you have prayerfully applied Book 2: Session Four.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the illustration in the Case Study about Pastor Zack?
2. Share some of the lessons you learned from the biblical passages about Paul and some of his companions (Colossians 4:7-8), Archippus (Colossians 4:17), and Paul's words to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

3. Why do some leaders resist being open to identifying new spiritual companions and releasing friends so they can be mentored by other leaders?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Which of the three reasons for releasing a spiritual companion to God, did you find most impactful? Why?
  - Releasing spiritually
  - Releasing open-handedly
  - Releasing generously
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What practical steps of obedience do you need to take as a result of this lesson?



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