

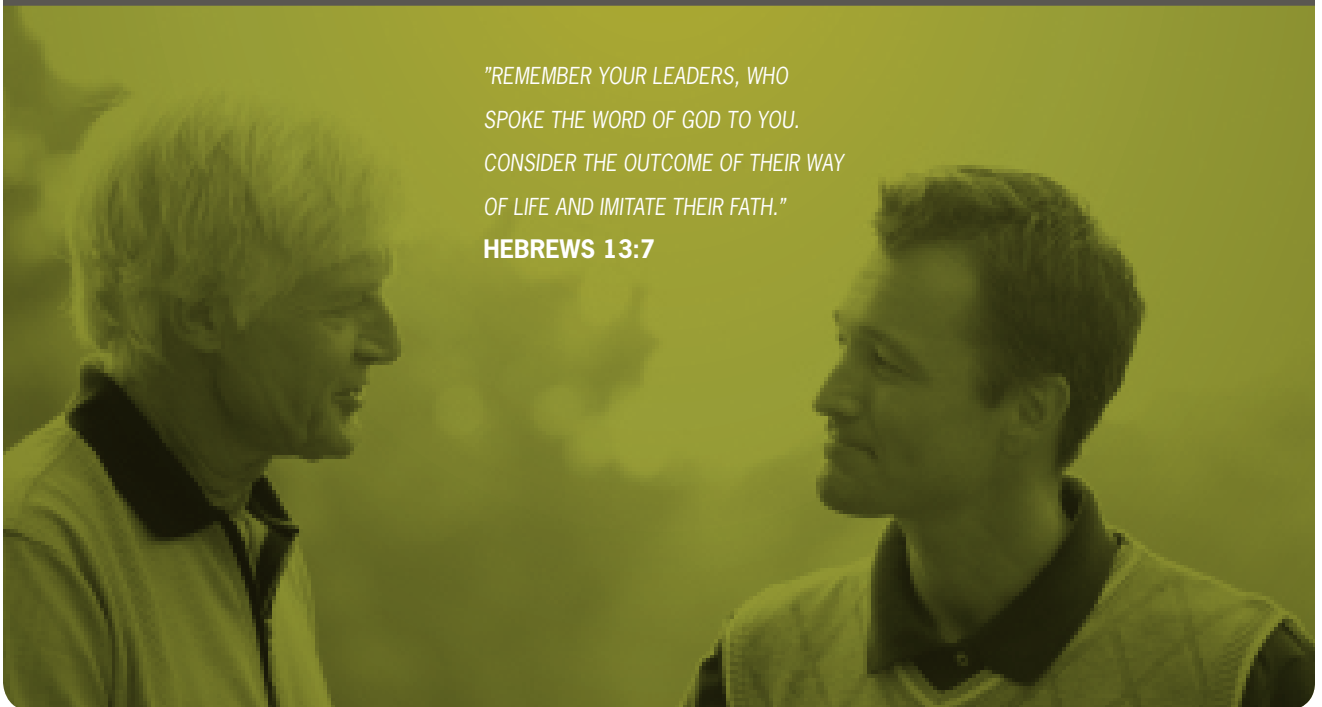
A Practical Guide for Developing Christians

SPIRITUAL MENTORING

**A GUIDE FOR FINDING AND BEING
A CHRISTIAN MENTOR** By **CLARE DE GRAAF**, author of *The 10 Second Rule*

*"REMEMBER YOUR LEADERS, WHO
SPOKE THE WORD OF GOD TO YOU.
CONSIDER THE OUTCOME OF THEIR WAY
OF LIFE AND IMITATE THEIR FATH."*

HEBREWS 13:7



MY MENTORS

When I came to faith at age 31 I knew I needed a spiritual mentor—someone to disciple me. I had attended a good church all my life, went to Christian schools, and had great parents, so I knew a lot about God and the Bible. But up to that point, I'd managed to compartmentalize my life. There was the biblical information I learned in church on Sunday, and the other life I actually lived Monday through Saturday.

I was clueless about how people who were serious about following Jesus went about following him in real life. What did they talk about on the golf course, when they went to lunch, or on the job? How did they share the good news of Jesus with others in a way that was natural and winsome? How did they treat their wives, make business and personal decisions? How did they pray, when did they pray, and for how long? I had a million questions.

I was going to Bible studies weekly and they were incredibly helpful, but I knew I needed something more—a coach, a teacher, and a mentor. When I decided to take up golf, I got a golf pro to teach me. He not only demonstrated how to properly hold a club, hit a ball out of the sand, but how to keep from getting into the sand in the first place—and a hundred other things I needed to know to enjoy the game. I learned because he played along with me. I watched him and he watched me and gave me the confidence I needed to play the game better.

I knew I needed similar lessons about living out the Christian life. I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I didn't even know enough to pray about a spiritual mentor.

There were two men I knew in my town who, for different reasons, I admired spiritually. So I asked both of them to disciple me. I called them up, met for lunch, told each where I was spiritually, and that I'd like to meet with them regularly to ask questions about everything Christian. I really didn't know what I didn't know, so I needed them to guide me.

The first man, Norm, has as the goal of his life to introduce as many people to Jesus as he can, and to walk alongside them until they can introduce others to Jesus. He was an evangelism machine. He had a great sense of humor, humble, careful not to offend, but he was bold and asked questions of people that got right to the heart of their need. I admired Norm's boldness and deep prayer life and still do.

The second guy, Gene, was a successful insurance executive who loved life and loved God. He devoted about half his working week to ministry and the rest making a living. But the thing that impressed me about Gene was that his spiritual life permeated everything he did. He wasn't one kind of person at the office and another when doing ministry. He did both with excellence and grace. Gene was a true Christian businessman.

Those two men helped shape my Christian life and I'll be forever grateful for their investment in me. I've learned a lot about spiritual mentoring since then, having mentored well over fifty men myself. One man I've met with for over 15 years, but most of the others for three or four years, tapering off to meeting once or twice a year or as needed. With each one I learned to ask better questions, give better assignments, and

NOTE: These materials may not be copied, transmitted electronically, edited, published, or sold without the written permission of the author. Additional copies can be purchased and downloaded at www.claredegraaf.com

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, *NIV*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

have realized that following Jesus is as much caught as taught.

I've written this booklet to help you find a mentor for yourself or to guide you into becoming a good mentor to another person, so that in the end you will live a life that truly makes God look good.

WHY MENTORING?

The pattern of human history has always been that each generation passes on to the next the worldview and values of the community, plus the life skills needed to live successfully. Previously, the vast majority of this teaching was done in the field, at the city gates, and around the table—in the natural activities of life, face to face, from father to son and mother to daughter. Grandparents in their roles as the patriarchs of the family also passed on wisdom that only comes from experience.

However, all that has changed. In the last 50 years, the most influential sources of information shaping our worldview and values are the media, formal education, and our peers. In too many cases believing parents and grandparents have checked out to Florida, leisure activities, the office, and the malls, leaving the next generation to teach themselves. Children who used to live and work in the same town as their parents have moved and now no longer have the benefit of this tribal, communal wisdom. Mentoring is all about getting back to hands-on teaching and modeling done naturally and in community.

CHRISTIAN MENTORING

Although the term “mentoring” does not appear in the Bible, the concept of one generation teaching the next is both explicit and implicit throughout the Bible. Eli taught Samuel, Elijah instructed Elisha. Parents were commanded by God to teach their children.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and

when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deut. 6:6-7)

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

In the New Testament, Jesus mentored his disciples for three years, then commanded them, “Go...teach... baptize...(then) teach them to observe all I have commanded you.” (Matt. 28). In other words, imitate me as I've taught you, and teach others to do the same. Peter says, “Be examples to the flock.” (I Peter 5:4). Paul tells Timothy, “And these things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (II Timothy 2:20).

In Titus 2, we have the most complete description of mentoring for all ages and sexes.

“You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.” (Titus 2:1-6)

For years I believed these instructions were for elders and pastors to do for their flocks. However, God has filled the body of Christ with many more potential mentors besides those who are named as elders or shepherds. And official elders can't personally meet all the mentoring needs of every Ted and Jennifer, Eric and Stephanie, in the congregation. So if you're spiritually mature at all, please consider intentionally moving in beside someone and building your life into theirs. Also be intentional about finding a mentor yourself. I believe every mature believer ought to have someone who they are mentoring and someone who is or has mentored them.

I've written this guide in the masculine gender and male examples, but the principles apply to women as well as men, and the illustrations and ideas can be adapted for women.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MENTORING?

Spiritual mentoring is the process of passing on from one person to the next their love for God and biblical truth, and the life skills and experiences needed to prepare them to be fully devoted followers of Jesus in every area of their lives.

- Mentoring is a relationship which fosters and encourages godly lives in both the mentor and protégé.
 - Mentoring is a relationship, not a program. While the process may involve some systematic teaching and study, most learning occurs naturally in response to real life experiences.
 - Mentoring is a relationship with someone you like, enjoy, believe in, and want to see lead a life of significance, fruitfulness, and contentment.
 - Mentoring is a relationship that flourishes in shared experiences: "Tell me and I'll remember for a while; show me and I'll remember for a lifetime."
- They encourage the spiritual disciplines of regular Bible study and personal prayer, and share ideas for doing that.
 - They are ready to answer spiritual, moral, or ethical questions using Scripture, or are committed to searching out the answer.
 - They serve as sounding boards. Protégés need someone on whom they can test new ideas.
 - They commit to pray regularly for their protégé.
 - They keep notes of discussions and assignments, and give a review before the next meeting.
 - They keep everything told to them confidential unless it's life threatening. (If there is a serious issue, I recommend consulting a pastor.)
 - Mentors honestly share their life experiences, tell appropriate stories of mistakes they've made or others have made, and reveal how God used those mistakes to shape them.

WHAT DOES A MENTOR DO?

- Mentors listen so they can discern what their protégé really needs.
- They provide feedback. The mentor has a broader base of experiences, ideas, and insights to draw from which might be helpful to the one being mentored.
- They are available. It's important for the protégé to know that there is someone he or she can turn to in times of crisis or when there is confusion in their life.
- They build self-confidence through encouragement. We all need someone who believes in us and will cheer us on.

BENEFITS FOR THE MENTOR

- A mentoring ministry pleases God. (I Thess. 2:11, 12; 4:1)
- It affords an opportunity to pass on godly wisdom to the next generation. (Ps. 78:2-7, II Tim. 2:2)
- Leading and teaching promotes personal spiritual growth in both the mentor and protégé. (Titus 2:3-8)
- Investing in people is personally rewarding. (III John 2-4)

FINDING A MENTOR

Finding the right mentor *for you* is critically important. First pray. Then ask your pastor or spiritually mature friends for names of potential mentors, in or outside your church. While mentors should have a reputation for godliness and a reasonably good understanding of the Bible, don't overlook a trusted family member or family friend.

Ask God to guide you to the right mentor. As God puts other names on your mind, write them down immediately. You may be tempted to dismiss some people as too busy or inaccessible, but if God is calling them to mentor you, you'll only know that by asking them.

FINDING A PROTÉGÉ

If God has blessed you with a level of spiritual maturity and some years of experience, pray about becoming a spiritual mentor. You don't have to be a spiritual giant. I have met men who could be mentors, but who disqualify themselves because they're not successful leaders or strong Bible teachers. All you really need to be a mentor is to love God, care for people, know the Bible reasonably well, and be willing to be transparent and available to another person.

At various times in my life I've met people who I sense need guidance. They might be new in town and have left their spiritual community or family behind. In conversations I've picked up signals from people who have never had a close relationship with their father or another spiritual person. And I've met men who are new Christians who could use someone to nurture them for a season to give them direction in life.

There is a greater need for mentors than there are spiritually mature men and women available. If you have the courage to pray about it, God will direct you to just the right person. I'm sure there is a protégé as described above right now looking for a person to help them, but afraid to ask or unsure who to ask. Be proactive. If God has put someone on your mind, pray about that person or ask God to bring someone to mind. He will. Then be bold. Take the first step. You reach out to them.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Getting Started:

1 Invite the potential protégé or mentor out for coffee, a meal, or invite them to your home. Tell them, "God put you on my mind, and I'm trying to

figure out why. Could we meet? I'd like to get to know you better."

- 2** Spend time getting acquainted. Share your family and faith journeys, interests, and hobbies. Start to get to know each other without any discussion of mentoring. These meetings will help you get a sense for whether or not this person is the one God has in mind for you.
- 3** After several meetings, if you sense a mutual desire to continue, discuss what each of you would like to see happen in your relationship. I don't recommend committing to a mentoring relationship until you've met three or four times. Make sure the chemistry works and discern if the protégé is teachable. Take time to pray about it. If you think you're ready to commit, give them a copy of this booklet and plan to discuss it when you next meet.
- 4** Ask your protégé to pray about whether or not he would like to continue meeting and ask them to call you if that's his desire. Don't ask for a commitment on the spot. Make it easy for them to say "no" by not calling. And tell them, "If I've not heard from you in the next few weeks, I'll assume this doesn't work for you and that's okay." Let the protégé take the next step; don't call to follow up.
- 5** If they call and want to continue, set a time for your next meeting. Meeting every other week is a good place to start.
- 6** Ask permission to share email or other contact information and to befriend them on Facebook. Ask for the names of their spouse and children, as well as a photo of their family, so you can visualize them in your prayers.
- 7** Toward the end of this booklet are some potential questions you may want to ask each other over the next few months to get started.

Future Meetings:

1 Take turns opening with prayer. You can discern a lot about a person by the way they pray.

- 2 At one of the early meetings, take time to share with each other in depth the history of the families you grew up in. You'll earn valuable information by learning about their family dynamics.
 - 3 Talk about how things went since the last time you met: joys, concerns, etc. Tell personal stories of tough decisions you've had to make or you've seen others make. The men I mentor love to hear stories of other Christians I admire.
 - 4 Generally speaking, mentoring isn't Bible study. However, a good mentor will encourage personal and group Bible study and use the Bible to give guidance to the protégé, particularly if they're spiritually immature.
 - 5 Take them to a sporting event, a seminar, family gathering, business meeting, or special event. Let them see how you relate to people, how you lead, follow, resolve conflict, confront, give and receive.
 - 6 Expose them to other spiritual men or women. Let them meet your friends. The goal is to have them see how spiritually mature believers handle themselves in everyday situations.
 - 7 Look for events in your life you can pass on to your protégé. Be transparent and share personal situations and how you handled them, even if poorly. Your protégé can learn as much from your mistakes as from your victories.
 - 8 Find out if there are any concerns either of you have that the other person could pray for before you meet again. Tell your protégé you will lift up his concerns in prayer and ask him to do the same. Teach him to write down prayer requests as a way to help remind each other to pray.
- Meet with two people you know are Christians and ask them to share their faith journey and what they do to stay spiritually strong.
 - Write out your personal testimony of how you came to faith—your spiritual journey.
 - Tell me your testimony, without reading it. (Then discuss how comfortable they felt and how and when to use it.)
 - Spend half a day in silence. (Pray, study the Bible, and ask God for direction.)
 - Write out your personal mission statement.
 - Write down two things you want to accomplish in the next year to grow in each of the following areas of your life:
 - Spiritually
 - Your Spouse
 - Your Children
 - Vocation and Finances
 - Friends and Extended Family
 - Physical and Emotional Health
 - Memorize some key verses from the Bible.
 - If someone asked you how to become a Christian, what would you tell them?
 - Define faith. What are the characteristics of a church? What does it mean to be saved? Saved from what? For what?

ASSIGNMENTS

After six to eight months of meetings, begin giving your protégé some assignments. Keep a journal or file on each protégé. At the next meeting, ask what he learned. Here are some sample assignments I've given:

THE RYTHMN OF MENTORING

Begin meeting weekly or every other week for a few months to build a relationship. Most protégés aren't aware of what they don't know. By conversing together and telling them stories about what God is teaching me through my family and my struggles, their eyes are opened to a whole world of Christ-like decision making and relationships they never knew existed.

After a few months, settle into a pattern of meeting once a month. Gradually invite him to participate in extra activities:

- Share dinner with your spouses.
- Have your families participate in a fun activity together.
- Invite him to sit in on Christian boards and meetings to observe how Christians organize themselves to accomplish a ministry.
- Take him to eat at a homeless shelter or visit a jail to learn to be more comfortable around people different than himself.
- Take him on a short-term missions' trip. This not only opens his eyes to ministry and missions, but allows him to observe how godly men conduct themselves away from home.
- Invite him to accompany you on day or overnight trips when you speak or teach. It not only provides quality time in the car, but an opportunity to talk about guarding your heart and your life while on the road.

Most of these activities are not “spiritual” in the way that is generally defined. They are simply opportunities to demonstrate how spiritual men and women conduct themselves, how they organize their lives, how they have good clean fun, in short—how they *do* life.

CARING FOR YOUR PROTÉGÉ

Be creative in your relationship with your protégé. Do something special at least once every three months to show that you are thinking of them.

- Write a short, handwritten note.
- Call just to see how he/she is doing.
- Share blogs, articles, or YouTube videos you find interesting and informative via email, Twitter, or Facebook.

CONCLUDING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Most mentoring relationships wind down and come to an end; their life cycles are limited. You will sense when that time comes. Most end after three to five years. If you've done your job well as a mentor, the protégé should need you less and less. As he becomes more spiritually mature and is making better decisions, growing in his love for God and others, it will be time to end so you can invest in another person.

In fact, that's exactly how to word it. Say, “You've made remarkable progress since we've begun meeting. I'm proud of you, of the man you've become. It's time for two things: For you to begin mentoring another man, and for us to stop meeting so I'm available for another protégé. Please call me anytime if you have a question, need guidance or encouragement. I'd enjoy meeting together a couple of times a year just to hear what's happening in your life.”

Make your protégé feel they've graduated, that they're ready, and that this is not a rejection of a relationship, but an affirmation of their progress. Send them off with your blessing and you'll have a friend for life.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK YOUR MENTOR

- What are some of the most important decisions you've made in your life?
- What are a few of the best decisions you've ever made?
- What are some of the worst decisions you've made?
- Do you have any suggestions or ideas for being a more godly husband or wife?
- Do you have any suggestions or ideas for being a more godly father or mother?
- How can I honor my parents better?
- What are some of the dangers I should be on the lookout for in the coming years?

- As you look back from your perspective, is there anything you would do differently if you could return to my age?
- What advice would you offer about being a better Christ-follower?
- Is there anything you observe in my life that concerns you?
- Are there any blind spots in my life that you see?
- Are you aware of helpful resources I could benefit from? (Books, websites, audio resources, etc.)
- How do you handle temptation, stress, anger, or any other issues when you've failed?
- What did you do, or wish you would have done, to help your children grow spiritually?
- Do you pray or read the Bible with your wife?
- How do you and your spouse resolve disagreements?

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK YOUR PROTÉGÉ

- In what areas of life do you think you are most successful? What's working for you?
- What are some of the greatest challenges you're facing right now?
- Who else in your life can give you Christian advice or counsel?
- How would you describe your relationship with Christ?
- If you could change anything in your life right now, what would it be?
- Is God asking you to grow or change in any area of your life that you're reluctant to do?
- If married: Describe your marriage relationship.
- If a parent: Describe your relationship with each of your children.
- What are you most passionate about?
- Do you feel comfortable with your level of biblical knowledge? Are there specific questions about God

or the Bible you want to discuss over the next few months?

- Is there anyone in your life right now that you have strong negative feelings about? Why?
- What frightens you in the middle of the night?
- What are your spiritual gifts?
- How are you serving your church or the Kingdom of God outside of your family?
- If your spouse were here, what would she say she would like to see different in your life?
- What is your comfort level in sharing your faith with non-Christians? What happened the last time you did?

I'm grateful to Paul Anthes, one of my protégés and a friend, for a number of these questions.

IN CONCLUSION

As one generation passes on the wisdom of God and the lessons of life to the next, families are strengthened, churches are healthier and the Kingdom of God prospers. For the love of God, please consider pouring yourself into another brother or sister in Christ. It will be an amazing lifetime gift and blessing for both of you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mentoring, by Bob Biehl

Apples of Gold, Betty Huizenga (women)

As Iron Sharpens Iron, Howard Hendricks

Spiritual Mentoring, by Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese

Mentoring 101, by John Maxwell

The Mentoring Project, a website championed by Don Miller

Clare De Graaf

4079 Park East Court SE Suite 102

Grand Rapids MI 49546

616.942.0041

claredegraaf@gmail.com