

Mentoring Principles

By Pastor Alan Utting



Mentoring is a useful tool in navigating life's challenges and at its heart, mentoring is about guidance, support, and encouragement. It involves someone with experience whether in life, faith, work, or relationships coming alongside another person to help them develop and flourish.

It's not about giving answers, but about walking with someone, listening, asking good questions, and helping them discover their own path. For the Believer it recognises God has a design for each life which is 'for our good and not for evil, to give us a future and a hope' (Jeremiah 29:11). This process of good mentoring will help us on our journey to be more effective disciples for Jesus Christ wherever we are located.

Mentoring can take many forms including formal or informal, short-term or long-lasting, but it always involves confidentiality, care, trust, and a desire to see the other person succeed. Whether you're a mentor or being mentored, both lives are enriched through this process. For this reason, I have had a mentor to help me in my way forward along with having the privilege of mentoring others. Below are some useful tips for the mentor and mentee.

Christian Mentoring principles.

1. Pray consistently to discern if you should mentor someone and keep praying for them if you choose to proceed.
2. In deciding who you choose, make sure that person genuinely wishes to follow God's path, no matter the cost.
3. Confidentiality is of utmost importance for any discussion within the session, unless you have their permission to share a matter.
4. Let them know upfront that initially appraisals will happen at 3, 6, and 12 months to assess progress. After a year, check if they want to continue; if not, don't take it personally.
5. Spiritual direction, supervision, and mentoring are separate disciplines, although some overlap can occur during a session.
6. Choose how often, where, and whether to meet in person or online.
7. Share personal vulnerabilities selectively, ensuring it is appropriate and with individuals you trust. Limit the frequency to maintain boundaries.
8. Create a relaxed setting and listen attentively. Don't talk too much!

9. Prepare for your session by seeking guidance from God. It's normal to feel inadequate, and prayerful preparation is essential.
10. I usually end with prayer and sometimes ask the mentee to pray for me if appropriate.
11. Mentors should prioritise continuous learning through reading, attending seminars if available and watching educational videos.
12. I usually don't take notes, though it can help with follow-up.
13. Don't repeat stories or mix them up when mentoring several people.
14. Mentors may also require 'supervision' to obtain perspective and acquire additional insights. I do not mention names with my supervisor of those I mentor.
15. Mentees should consider their discussion topics before hand. The mentor could open the session by asking, "What's on your mind you would like to explore today?" Sometimes you may like to reflect on your last session. Always treat their input seriously.
16. Sessions do not need to be intense; incorporating appropriate moments of lightness or enjoyment can be beneficial.
17. Aim to provide encouragement and support at the end of a session, as the individual may be experiencing vulnerability.
18. Schedule your next meeting in your calendar.

Resources

John C Maxwell, *Mentoring 101*