

## **How To Find a Mentor – and Then Become One**

*By Jim Burns, Ph.D.*

Do you have a support system in place to help you grow and thrive as an individual? Every person should have one! Finding a mentor(s) in your life may be one of the best things you can do for yourself! What's a mentor? A mentor is a trusted friend (often someone older with more life experience) who can share their life with you and provide you with wise advice and perspective. A mentor can affirm, encourage, challenge, push, warn and even correct when necessary. Now, you may find it difficult to talk about your life with others, but finding and building relationships with others you trust – those who you can discuss the aspects of your life with – will provide you with rich benefits: for yourself, your marriage and your family – in the long run. People who have a mentor have a greater chance surviving and thriving in life! In addition to finding a great mentor, one of the most fulfilling parts of life can be found in becoming a mentor to someone else. You don't have to be perfect in order to be an effective mentor. You simply must be willing to enter into a meaningful relationship and to share your life with someone else.

### **Here are some suggestions for finding a mentor:**

- Think about what life issues you would like a trusted friend's advice on.
- Think about people you know that you respect and believe have been successful in these life issues. (People in your church would be a great place to start in this process.)
- Contact one of these people and ask them to join you for lunch or a cup of coffee.
- In the early stages, don't push the mentorship issue. Focus on building or strengthening a relationship with the person. Ask life questions. Share from your own life experiences.
- Be patient. But, if you haven't "clicked" relationally with this person after some time, and the comfort and trust level doesn't grow, go back to your list of possible mentors and start the process over again.
- As the friendship develops, you might become comfortable to begin sharing with one another on a deeper level. If this opportunity presents itself, go ahead and talk about the mentorship idea. Ask whether the person would mind meeting with you on a regular basis to talk about the issues in life that are important to you.

### **Here are some suggestions on being a mentor to someone else:**

- Mentoring takes time. You need to be sure you have some time for the person you mentor on a regular basis.
- Consider what areas of your life you can most effectively advise and support someone else in. These can be a wide range of areas, from issues regarding living the Christian life, to marriage, to raising teenagers, to balancing your checkbook, to fixing cars.
- Be on the lookout to develop a friendship with someone else. If you really want to be a mentor to someone, in contrast to just building a friendship - you might target someone younger than yourself for building this friendship.
- Identify possible people you could build a mentor relationship with. (Again, people in your church would be a great place to start your list from.)
- Contact one of these people and ask them to join you for lunch or a cup of coffee.

- In the early stages, don't push the mentorship issue. Focus on building or strengthening a relationship with the person. Ask life questions. Share from your own life experiences.
- Be patient. But, if you haven't "clicked" relationally with this person after some time, and the comfort and trust level doesn't grow, go back to your list of possible mentors and start the process over again.
- As your friendship develops, you will hopefully become comfortable to begin sharing with one another on a deeper level. If this opportunity presents itself, go ahead and talk about the mentorship idea. Begin to pour your life into this person.
- Keep in mind that being a mentor does not mean that the person you mentor has to make all of the same choices you would make. Mentorship is not about creating another you. It's about coming alongside someone else and being an important source of support and encouragement for their lives.

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