

Theory 8

The Spiritual Mentoring Relationship

What mentorship is about: A Spiritual Mentor is a person usually of the same sex who offers one-on-one time with the mentee to guide them along their spiritual journey towards sanctity. This implies that the Mentor is faithful and knowledgeable enough in the spiritual life to guide others. It also means that they, too, are receiving spiritual direction or mentorship. So, your goals are:

1. Make sure the person seeking mentorship with you **understands what mentorship is** (sharing the basic principles of the interior life, how to do daily meditation (3 R's), how to examine your conscience, how to create and follow a Rule of Life, how to maximize the graces of receiving Holy Communion, how to make a good and frequent confession, etc.)
2. Make sure the mentee **understands what it is not** (a counseling session, an employee/employer session, a gripe session (although some venting is unavoidable and your mentee needs to know that you hear and understand their difficulties), a commander/subordinate session).
3. You will offer the mentee concrete and solid spiritual principles but at the same time you need to remember to offer yourself to them with unconditional love and demanding love.
4. The mentee needs to recognize his or her need to follow through on the suggested steps you offer, but this is done freely and not because of some vow of obedience. Further, you need to know that your mentee is committed to following through on your guidance and suggestions.
5. Help mentees assimilate these principles and apply to their own life, to include those who share their state in life (spouse and in-house family members).
6. Listen carefully and well to what the mentee says. Be encouraging, understanding, supportive, but challenging.

What you're trying to accomplish: Your goal is to help your mentee convert his or her heart and grow in holiness. Thus, their prayer life, moral life, catechetical life are all proper areas of discussion.

1. Allow for some discussion on relationship troubles because these can affect one's relationship with Jesus. Keep in mind, you are not their counselor; however, applying certain spiritual principles to their relational situation in the form of advice is appropriate (i.e., how to be more charitable, patient, humble, how to offer up suffering for the relationship in question, how to handle the stress or frustration that comes from the relationship productively and effectively)

2. Help them attain all of the goods available to them by God to be happy. *

What you do during the mentoring session:

1. Remember to always begin and end in prayer.
2. Ask plenty of questions that help the mentee share what is on their heart. I usually begin each session with, "What has God put on your heart to share today?"
3. Help them make and keep a rule of life specific to their state in life.
4. Hold mentee accountable to what he or she has promised to do.
5. Try to keep the meeting to 45 min to an hour.

How to find mentees: It may happen that your pastor will not be overly excited to send you mentees. Don't allow yourself to get discouraged. He may have many good reasons for this, like perhaps he has allowed things like this in the past only to find out that bad doctrine or questionable behavior ensued. So *always be positive and supportive* of your pastor's decisions!

1. This means that you must take holy initiative to find mentees for yourself. You can accomplish this by telling others the formation program you've been through and are trained for, ask if that might interest them, and then offer to meet with them just once or twice for starters to see how it goes. If it's not what either of you bargained for, then you can discontinue, no questions asked, no hurt feelings!
2. Also, we try to connect you with mentees, but this depends on a host of factors:
 - a. How many requests School of Faith receives.
 - b. How well you keep your contact info with SoF updated.
 - c. How well you keep in touch with our communications and newsletters once you graduate.

Final Tips:

1. The Spiritual Mentor can and should share personal information within the session with the mentee for 2 reasons:
 - a. You want to build trust, and vulnerability builds trust.
 - b. You want to show empathy; meaning, you understand where the mentee is, and you can make this a shared learning experience.
2. What not to do:
 - a. Go on and on about your own experiences.
 - b. At the beginning of your mentoring session, if the mentee asks something like, "How was your retreat/vacation...?" answer briefly but then bring the mentee back to his/her spirituality.

- c. Remember, this is a Mentor session, **not peer-to-peer**. Thus, **keep enough of a distance relationally** for you to feel comfortable enough to share the hard truths and offer firm guidance and for your mentee to feel comfortable sharing deep and sensitive information, while **allowing room for natural growth of affection**.
- d. Be open to meeting via Zoom/FaceTime/GoogleDuo because an effective and fruitful mentoring relationship can occur without meeting in person.

***Three levels of good things:**

1. The Divine Good – Union with God, sharing in His life by means of the sacraments, prayer, and the practice of virtue.
2. Profound Goods:
 - a. Physical goods (food, shelter, health, safety, security, exercise, rest)
 - b. Psychological well-being
 - i. Order and stability
 - ii. Variety / Uncertainty, opportunity for change and growth
 - c. Friendship with family and friends
 - d. Knowledge – truth
 - e. Achievement / meaningful work / a way that we make the world a better place
 - f. Beauty – which is very different from entertainment
3. Superficial or Instrumental goods – These are just a means to an end and not an end in themselves – like books
 - a. Books are good, but only as a means to knowledge or beauty or achievement.
 - b. Protein, carbs, and fats as a means to nutrition...my main food groups are coffee and butter, oh yea and bacon...
 - c. Money, and a good reputation
 - d. Again, the superficial goods are just a means to higher goods.

We need all of these, but we must keep them in order.

**Love the lesser things less; love the greater things more.
Virtue is rightly ordered love.**

Resources:

Toolbox 5: 1st Mentoring Session

Toolbox 6: 2nd Mentoring Session

Toolbox 7: Art of Curiosity