

THE MENTORING PROJECT

Field Manual

Dear Mentor,

Welcome to The Mentoring Project mentor training! We are thrilled that you are taking this important step to faithfully invest in the life of a child. We are praying that both you and your mentee will be blessed through this mentoring relationship.

The Mentoring Project Field Manual was designed to be a guide for people who want to be mentors. It is designed to be used during a training session, and later as a reference that can be reviewed after the training. This document comes from our experience as well as the valuable insights that we are learning from our mentors in the field.

The main objective of this training is to establish the initial commitment to be a mentor, as well as outline who a mentor is, and what a mentor does. It is our hope that this training session will provide you not only with the “tools” that will help you with your mentoring relationship, but also that it will serve as an important step in preparing you for some of the realities of mentoring.

After the training session, you will be contacted by the matching agency selected by your congregation in order to go through the necessary background checks and interview process to be matched with a mentee. We hope that the training you receive through The Mentoring Project solidifies your commitment to mentor and gives you a biblical

undergirding as you move into an intentional relationship.

It is important for you to know that this training is not the final piece of becoming a mentor—rather it is only the introduction. If at any time during the training or interview process, you decide that mentoring is not for you then you have that choice. Or, if for some reason the matching organization decides not to match you with a mentee, we trust that choice as well.

Our goal at The Mentoring Project is to inspire and equip churches to build sustainable mentoring communities. We hope and pray that this training will set you and your mentoring community up for successful and fruitful relationships that change the lives and destinies of those you mentor. Thanks again for your commitment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Sowers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The best is yet to be,

John Sowers

President, The Mentoring Project

www.thementoringproject.org

“I believe in the power of story and invite you into the new story we are telling. I believe we can rewrite the story of the fatherless generation. This narrative does not have to be cyclical. It can end with fewer men in prison, less families abandoned, and the fatherless being cared for by positive role models who believe, like I do, that we can choose to live a better story.”

Donald Miller

Founder, The Mentoring Project

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TOOL #1: LOVE

PART ONE: SHOWING UP

“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and truth.”

(1 John 3:18)

The first tool that a mentor takes into his relationship with his mentee is love. But what does this look like? How does a mentor love a mentee, especially if they have just met? What is appropriate? The first way that a mentor shows love is by showing up. **Showing up is the first and most important step for the mentoring relationship.**

Mentoring is a process, and the faithful and unconditional presence of a mentor is its foundation.

PRESENCE - BEING WITH ONE ANOTHER - IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

} The second a parent leaves a new baby alone to sleep, he or she will cry out, wanting that parent back. And nearly all creatures are this way. We all have a strong, built-in desire to be in relation with one another. This is absolutely true of mentoring.

The children impacted by fatherlessness are used to having authority figures leave. For them, dads and authority figures are a revolving door. They are inconsistent, here today and gone tomorrow, and not to be trusted. By showing up in the life of a fatherless child you create a new groundswell of hope. It revives a space in a child's heart that can begin to trust again. For a generation that has been defined by rejection,

faithful and unconditional presence says, “I am here. I accept you. And I am with you.”

**“I AM WITH YOU,” IS
SOMETHING THAT GOD
REPEATEDLY SAYS TO US.** } God wants us to understand this idea of faithful and unconditional presence. He is with us: yesterday, today, and forever. In the depths, in the dark places, in the valley of the shadow of death, God is there. This is something that he communicates over and over again in the Bible.

When Joseph was thrown in a well and left for dead, sold into slavery, falsely accused of rape and imprisoned, “the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.”

(Genesis 39:23)

Moses pleaded with God to stay with him and his people. In Exodus 33:14-15, God says to Moses, “My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest.” To which Moses replies, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.”

After Moses died, Joshua took over the leadership of the people of Israel and the calling to take them into the Promised Land. God said to him, “As I was with Moses, so will I be with you.... Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua

1:5, 9)

When Daniel was thrown into the blazing furnace, (Daniel 3:23-25) King Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed, “I see four men in the fire, and one looks like the son of the Gods.”

When the people of God were captured and exiled by the Babylonians, God kept sending them messages and prophecies that he was with them. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God says, “I am with you and I will save you.” (Jeremiah 30:11) Through the prophet Isaiah, he reminds them, “Do not fear, I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you, the flames will not set you ablaze.” (Isaiah 43:2)

Also through the mouth of Isaiah, God delivers the good news that will ring all throughout history, the music whose notes will never stop ringing announcing the coming One that will bring light, love, and peace forever. Isaiah 7:14 says, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (God with us).” After his earthly ministry is finished, and Christ has been crucified, buried, and raised, he gives this mandate. “Go and make disciples of all nations... and I will be with you, even until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

God’s heart and intention to be with us is never louder than at the Incarnation of Christ, the miracle Christmas birth of Immanuel, God with

us. God demonstrates a desire for radical “with-ness,” the “with-ness” that had not been fully restored since the Garden of Eden, when God walked with Adam and Eve in the “cool of the day.” God again desires to be close to his people, to us. Jesus by prophetic name is “God with us,” and he promises to be with us until the end.

What does Immanuel, “God with us,” mean for me as a mentor?

First and foremost, this means that **“showing up” is the foundation and promise of our mentoring relationship.**

Showing up says to our mentee, “I am with you. I will be with you.” This means that at the core of our relationship, we trust people who stand beside us, no matter what happens. We trust people who show up faithfully in our lives and accept us, the good and the bad - everything. This is consistent and unconditional presence. And this is the bedrock of our mentoring relationship.

We have found that **mentees care much more about our presence than what activities we do with them.** They want to be around us, they want to be with us. Some of my best mentoring moments have happened while eating burritos, going to the bank together, or to the carwash. Activities are a distant concern compared to being “with.” Our mentees will always care more about our presence than any fancy activities. Showing up is something we all can do. It doesn’t matter how intelligent, outgoing, gifted, funny, or cool we are, showing up is the foundation of our relationship.

When dealing with fatherless children, there is a great chance that he or she spends lots of time alone. They may even be a “latchkey” kid. The time they do spend with others may be mostly with peers, children their own age at school, or siblings. They most likely may not have much intentional time with an older person at all. This is why showing up is so essential. It is the foundation and central way that we faithfully build trust - one meeting at a time, for days and weeks and months. It is very common at the beginning of mentoring relationships to take several months of just showing up in the life of your mentee. This may mean playing basketball or catch, helping with schoolwork, or just being around, before a child begins to open up and trust. These first new months are critical in the trust-building process, and showing up is the cornerstone.

Food for Thought: Take a moment to remember and reflect on who has shown up faithfully for you in your life. Who was there for you? Who showed up in your life with faithful and unconditional presence? What difference did it make? How did it shape who you are today? How can you take that into your mentoring relationship?

PART TWO: GIVING

The second way that we show love to our mentee is by giving. God demonstrated his love for us by giving his son. “For God so loved the world, he gave his son.” (John 3:16) God loves, so God gives.

Giving is a natural overflow and an important part of love. Giving requires sensitivity, someone who can do what Romans 12:15 says: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn.” In this way, we become sensitive to the needs of our mentees by reflecting their emotions, and sharing with them.

When we show up faithfully, we are giving our time. But this is just the beginning. In our context, **giving is living for others.** Giving is living with a profound sensitivity for others, and living unselfishly, with other-centeredness. There are several benchmarks that we can look to for this:

**ONE WAY WE GIVE IS BY
OFFERING OUR EAR TO
ACTIVELY LISTEN.**



Again, extended listening may or may not happen right away as we previously discussed, at first we must work on

building trust and showing up. However, you will probably be surprised once the trust is established, that most youth are willing to talk as long as you allow them.

One of my own personal mentors, Bill, would listen to me talk for hours. In this way, he was saying, “You are important to me. What you are saying is important. I care.” Bill would actually craft and create

opportunities to listen. He would take me along on long car rides, driving to the hunting club or the fishing hole, or on some errand, and then ask me questions and listen. It would not be uncommon for Bill to listen to me talk for an hour.

Not only does listening communicate to others that they are important, it gives us the chance to get to know them, to affirm and encourage them. Bill would listen to me and then say short, encouraging remarks like, “Well that is good.” “Great job!” “Sounds like you worked hard for that. Good decision.” And looking back, most of the time I talked for an hour, I was just looking for affirmation. I wasn’t really looking for help with school, or friends, or sports or girls (even though a few times I was), I was mainly looking for affirmation. I was talking because I wanted Bill to be proud of me, and I wanted to be reminded of that over and over again.

This is huge for us to know as mentors. **Usually, our mentees are not looking for advice, but affirmation.** They want someone to listen to them, value them, care for them, and be proud of them. Every once in a while, they might actually look for direction or guidance or advice, but they are mainly looking to you for affirmation. Listening is a way that we can offer this.

James 1:19 calls us to be “quick to listen and slow to speak.” The best mentors give their full, undistracted attention. Here are some measuring sticks for us as mentor-listeners. Do we talk more in relationships or

listen more? When we listen are we thinking about something else like what we are going to say next, or are we listening fully? Do we make eye contact? Are we open to what they are saying, or are we thinking about how to correct or judge it? Are we a safe person for someone to talk to?

We allow the other person to “have the ball” in our conversations, by being interested and open, and by thinking about their needs and their interests first. If they don’t “have the ball”, we consistently try to “pass” it to them, by asking questions. The best questions don’t have one-word answers. The question, “how was school?” allows for a one-word answer. “Fine.” “Good.” “Ok.”. But the question, “What is your favorite class at school?” at least gives you a topic. This then allows you to follow up with, “What is your favorite part of P.E.?”

Most boys converse better side-by-side instead of face to face. Meaning, a boy will do better talking while throwing a baseball instead of sitting down over coffee. Girls, on the other hand, usually do much better talking face to face. Keep this in mind as you are trying to build rapport with your mentee. Most boys will not carry on long and detailed conversations with you. Also, for both boys and girls, it helps to have an open line of communication with the mother or guardian, so that you will know what is going on in their life as well.

Several years ago, my six-year old mentee won a track meet and was awarded a blue ribbon. His mother told me that he carried around the ribbon in his backpack all week waiting to show it to me. About five

minutes into our time together, I asked him about his track meet and how he did, which provided him the opportunity to tell me about it and show me his ribbon. If his mother had not told me, I probably would have never have known about it. It is important for mentors to keep open lines of communication with the mother or guardian about school, extracurricular activities, home life, social life, friends, and anything else that is going on in their mentee's life.

Philippians 2:3 says, "In humility, consider others better than yourselves." The principle of others-centeredness is one of the most important principles of mentoring. Living for others means that you have to work at it, and be a student of that person. What is going on in the life of our mentee? What do they care about? What makes them tick? What would they like to talk about or ask? What are their dreams? What do they like or dislike? What is their story? How do they feel about their family, school, or job? Philippians continues, "...not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with others, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (2:4-5)

Food for Thought: Growing up, who listened to you? Who celebrated with you? Who did you turn to when you wanted someone to be proud of you? Or when you were sad? Who gave you full, undistracted attention? Who "looked out for your interests?" How did that make you feel affirmed? What can you take from that into your mentoring relationship?

PITFALLS for LOVE:

1. Inconsistency. Not showing up faithfully. Not building trust.
2. Becoming discouraged if our mentee does not show up. We must pursue our mentee the same way God pursues us.
3. Showing up but not being fully present. Being distracted.
4. Not being a giver, not being “other-centered.”
5. Not being a good listener. Trying to give advice before hearing.

Love is the first tool for the mentor. We must love by **showing up** faithfully, and **giving sacrificially**.