

# How To Mentor: A You-Can-Do-This Guide



A Cru Ministry



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# An Accidental Step Into Mentoring

By Carlos Santiago

It started with a simple statement.  
“I have to work.”

Every time I tried to arrange an outing, or game night, or anything, my friend seemed to have the same excuse: “work.”

It didn’t make sense to me. He lived with his parents, all his major expenses were covered, and he wasn’t saving for anything in particular. Yet for some reason, he felt compelled to work two jobs, leaving him with little time for anything else.

“Why?” I asked.

The conversation that followed continued on and off for several months. We talked on the phone, after playing ball, and on walks. We

talked about goals, responsibility, doing right by his parents, and the need for Sabbath rest. Then one day, he announced he was quitting his weekend job. The decision not only freed him up to focus more of his energy on the job with a better career path, but it gave him a better work/life balance.

I didn’t realize it at the time, but my nosy question was my first foray into the world of mentoring.

### What is mentoring?

Mentoring is about asking good questions and helping someone think through the answers. You don’t need to be an expert or have it all together; you just need to be willing to listen and invest the time to help someone grow.

Mentoring is friendship with an added purpose.

I've mentored people through getting out of debt, choosing a career, growing in their faith, choosing a spouse, strengthening their marriage, and raising children. Others have mentored me through faith crises, major job transitions, parenting issues, church leadership crises, and cross-country moves.

Friends should always help each other grow.

Jesus's last instructions before He ascended back into heaven were, "Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

These instructions go far beyond the idea of "winning converts." It requires long-term commitment to walk alongside another person, close enough that you can help them apply Jesus' teachings to every aspect of their life.

Are you willing to make that type of investment in the life of someone else? (Is there a chance you're already doing it?)

## Mentoring

 is not ...

controlling another person's life.

blindly supporting every decision.

guided by your opinions and feelings.

acting like you have it all together.

 is ...

showing genuine love (Mark 12:31).

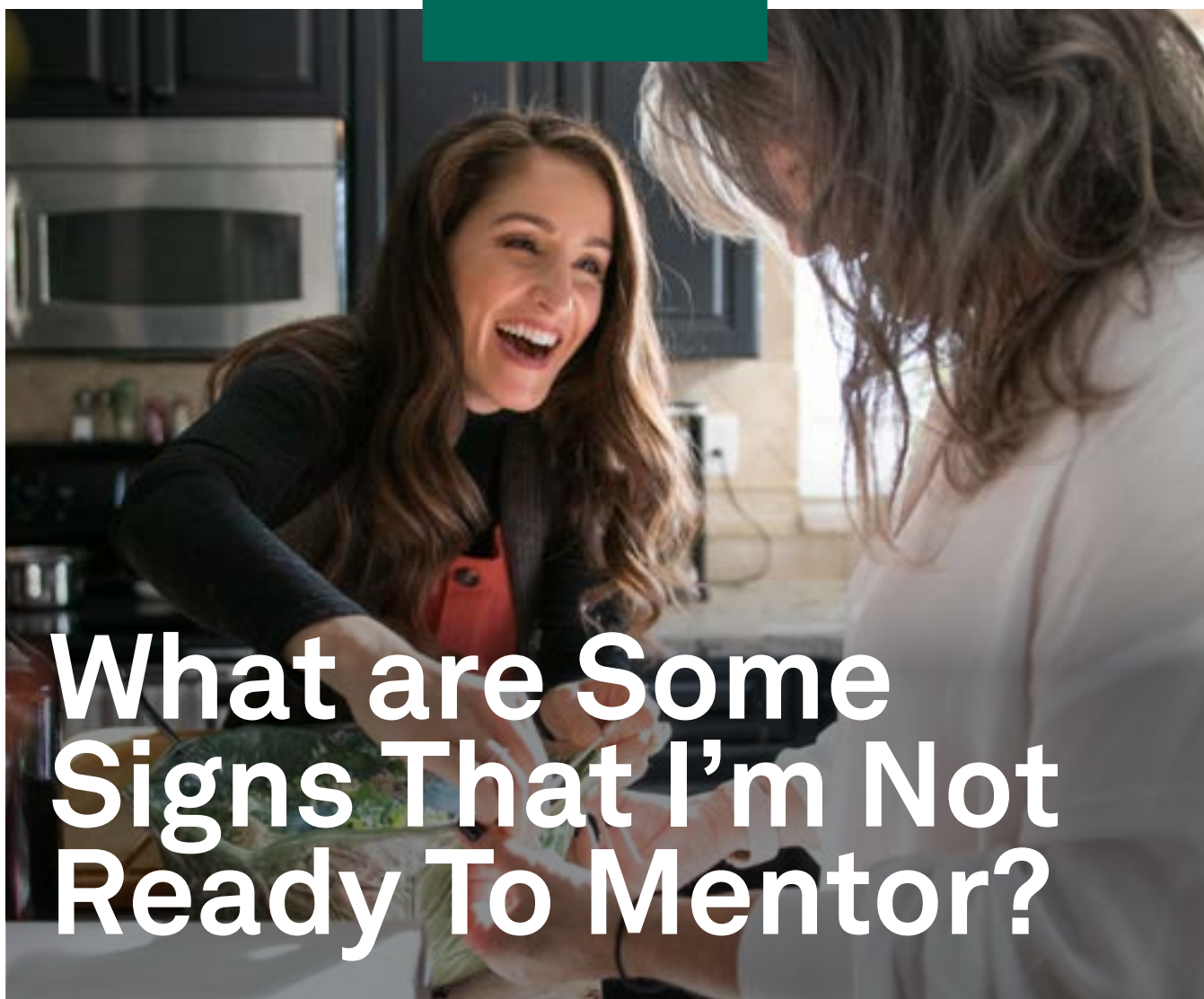
chipping away at the bad and polishing the good (Proverbs 27:17).

based on truth from God's Word (2 Timothy 2:2).

being transparent enough to show how God has worked in your areas of weakness (2 Corinthians 1:4).

We all need an older, wiser, been-there friend in our lives to help us take our next step of faith.

If you are willing to answer the call to be that person for someone else, read on. For more insight into the role of a mentor, listen to ["What is a Mentor?"](#)



# What are Some Signs That I'm Not Ready To Mentor?

Author Max Lucado reminds us, “If God chose only righteous people to change the world, you could count them all on one finger—Jesus! ... Because you’re imperfect, you can speak of making mistakes. Because you’re a sinner, you can speak of forgiveness. God restores the broken and the brittle, then parades them before the world as trophies of his love and strength.”

You don’t need to be a walking version of Bible software. You don’t need to be older than 60, perfect, on-call for every little meltdown, a relational referee, or even a great teacher.

But some seasons in our lives find us more in a place where we need to find a mentor (or a counselor) more than be one. For example:

- **You’re in an unhealthy marriage.** We’re talking disunity, constant bickering, fighting, frequent miscommunications, and other [marital warning signs](#).
- **You’re struggling through significant issues**—like abuse (received or given), pornography, workaholicism, addictions, eating disorders, a lack of forgiveness, or major areas of sin.

- **You're not aware of any personal weakness.**

The most winsome, effective, and easy-to-follow mentors are those with a firm grasp of their [own brokenness](#) and dependence on Christ, rather than all they've done right. As the saying goes, we all need someone whose hindsight can become our foresight.



- **You're not willing to appropriately share what you've gone through that is hard, painful, or embarrassing.** Vulnerability begets vulnerability--and the level of openness in your mentoring relationship is a significant key to its effectiveness. Recall that nearly every character in the Bible aside from Christ is listed with weakness in full display—so the whole story of God's redemption in their lives can be told.

- **You're not past your potential mentee's stage of life.** This doesn't mean you need

to be, say, done raising kids to mentor a young mom, or completely have your act together in your marriage. But it's wise to be far enough ahead to share what, by God's kindness, you've overcome.

- **You don't have time for others.** Anyone can teach principles. But a mentor is willing to make an investment of time, money, energy, and even emotional pain. If you're too busy to invest the time, you may need a mentor to help you prioritize your schedule.

If you find you're not ready to mentor, don't lose heart. Remember: Working through issues makes us even better future mentors as we gain the benefit of hindsight, experience, and knowledge of the long-term effects of past decisions.



# How Can I Anticipate My Areas of Strength and Weakness?

By Janel Breitenstein

Blindspots in any relationship can be destructive, because they're just that: beyond our vision.

In mentoring, not knowing your own weaknesses could result in unexplained distance, a mentee disinterested in your suggestions, even the two of you never being able to meet.

But knowing your strengths matter, too. Those can bring you confidence on days when you wonder if God picked the right person for this mentoring relationship.

Yet there's another reason to know our strengths: We often expect more from others in areas we're naturally gifted in. ("Why can't this person just show up on time?" "They committed to this action ... do they have no self-discipline?" "Why do they never ask a question about me?")

Unfortunately, your understanding of your strengths doesn't mean your mentee will automatically appreciate your wealth of giftedness in this area. Trust is always earned. Treat your strengths as a gift that's optional for your mentee to open when they're ready.

How do you anticipate where you'll shine as a mentor—and where you'll need intentional effort?

- Read through the PLACE acronym in this download, highlight your perceived strengths, and in a separate color, highlight your perceived weaknesses. Take the "Are You a Good Listener?" Quiz, too.
- Then discuss your perceptions and results with your spouse or a close friend. Do they agree? Ask, "What do you see could be my natural strengths as a mentor? My areas of weakness? And how do you practically suggest I counter those?"
- Accept their thoughts without defensiveness or comebacks. This is a time to humbly learn and grow.
- Open the door for feedback in your mentoring relationship: "Hey, I'm growing to maturity like you are. So I'm inviting you to speak into my life about blindspots you might be see—some which may become obvious through our relationship. Keep telling me the truth, and I'll attempt to stay open, even when your feedback is uncomfortable."

Acknowledge potential areas of weakness to your mentee. "Hey, I'm realizing lately I need to work on being a better listener. I can imagine that might frustrate you. I would appreciate your graciousness as I work through that. Please don't assume I don't care. I'm just growing."



# Who's a Good Candidate for Me?

In what areas of your life have you experienced God's grace? Where have you been challenged—and overcome?

Did you have a tough time adjusting to being a new parent or dealing with the sleepless nights? Maybe you can mentor that expectant mother at church.

Did God help you through a difficult health issue? Perhaps you can come alongside someone who just received a bad diagnosis.

Did your marriage almost end, but you held on and God healed your relationship? Your story can make all the difference to a couple contemplating divorce.

Your most significant areas of weakness and shame are often what God wants to use to help others. Don't be afraid to let him turn your pain into purpose.



# How Will I Know if We Have Mentor “Chemistry”?

Mentoring is considerably more difficult if your personalities don't naturally click.

This doesn't mean it's impossible or that God hasn't led you to this mentoring relationship. Evaluating your relationship's chemistry is just one way of “counting the cost” of the effort and commitment to mentor (see Luke 14:28-30).

How will you feel mentoring this person when you've had a bad week? Are you optimistic about their potential? When you're honest, what are all your motivations?

And that works both ways. If a person easily respects you, you're not seeking to earn that respect or prove yourself, nor do you feel the need to woo your mentee toward your advice. One way to test your mentor chemistry is to see if your mentee seems as motivated to continue the relationship as you do.



Use a similar test that you'd use for friendship: *If we were in similar stages of life, would we likely be friends? Do our conversations feel stilted on either side? Do I feel compassion, hope, and/or a sense of vision about what this could become ... or will I be dragging my emotions along because of a sense of duty?*

# How Do I Approach Someone About Mentoring?

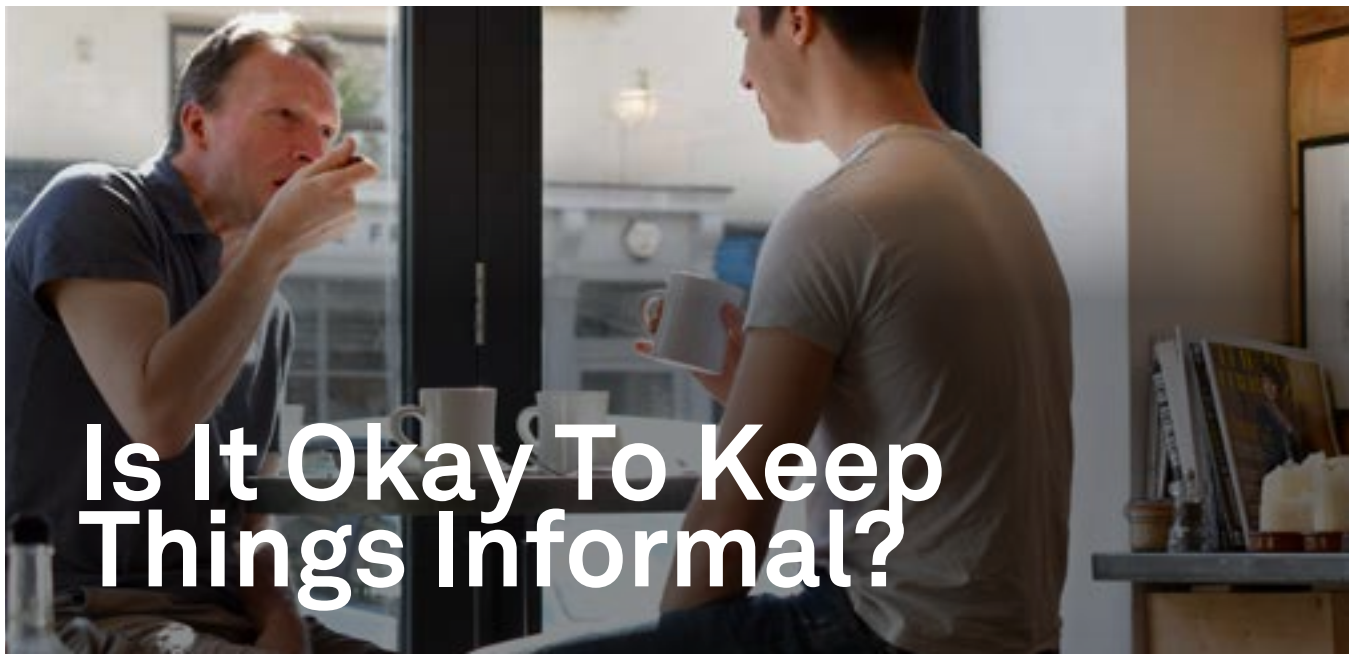
Keep in mind the reason people seek mentors in the first place! FamilyLife research shows 90% of people turn to friends and family for marital and parenting help. A mentor is just a more experienced person who comes alongside you at a critical time and offers a listening ear, an encouraging voice, and a guiding hand.

So think about the “pain points” and interests of your potential mentee. What needs do they feel you could step into? (But do this without assuming! No one enjoys “help” they don’t feel they need.)

Then try starting the conversation this way. Ultimately, this relationship is about them more than your need to help.

- **Affirm your relationship:** “I’ve been thinking lately how much I enjoy hanging out with you.”
- **Describe their potential or your understanding of the need:** “I love watching you with your kids. I remember what it was like for me as a young dad, and I felt so overwhelmed but still geared up about the possibilities.”
- **Humbly make the pitch:** “It can be a little awkward approaching from this side of things—but I didn’t know if you’d enjoy the possibility of a mentoring relationship with me. I thought we could talk more about what it’s like to be a dad, what I’m glad I did, what I wish I would’ve known, even the ways I blew it.”
- **Leave a way out:** “But if you don’t feel interested in that, that’s okay. I just wanted to let you know I’d be interested.”





# Is It Okay To Keep Things Informal?

Who knows if Paul and Timothy called their relationship “mentoring” or not? We know eventually, it was seen that way.

But the relationship itself is far more important than what we call it.

Maybe you’re concerned putting a name on things will make it seem like you see yourself as a superior teacher. It could be your mentee would feel bruised by the implication that this isn’t a completely lateral relationship. Or perhaps the expectation of structured meetings would make interactions feel stiff or demanding.

Whatever the reason, backdoor mentoring isn’t a bad thing. It does have its limitations—like needing to find more subtle ways to suggest change. Or lacking the natural authority of a mentor. Or missing a more intentional structure or accountability. But these can all be worked around.

Prayerfully follow your intuition about whether to formalize your relationship—and for God’s power and favor to rest on your connection either way.

## *Would you like to have coffee?*

Seminary professors Barbara Neumann and Dr. Sue Edwards encourage us to be attentive to the mentoring opportunities around us and to forget the idea that mentoring has to be structured.

They also remind us that reaching a younger generation means you’ll need to enter their world. Listen to [this podcast](#) to hear their advice.

## How Should I Structure Our Time Together?

# Finding Your PLACE in Mentoring: An Acronym To Guide You

## P.L.A.C.E.

Gary and Cindy Blunier, mentoring instructors from FamilyLife, recommend the acronym PLACE as a compass to help you navigate mentoring experiences.

### P: Pray

Real heart change comes only from God, and prayer helps create an environment for that change.

Pray out loud and with your mentee—even if only to open or close your time together or to approach God about challenging situations.

### L: Listen

Slow down and create a safe place where you allow yourself to be pulled into another's experience: "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion" (Proverbs 18:2).

Take care to listen for true understanding rather than prepare a wise response! Take time to "sit" with the person rather than moving on to a solution.

And as you gain trust from entering into someone's sacred spaces, you'll build relationships strong enough to hold truth, the Bluniers assert.

## A: Ask

Asking good questions is more important than having all the answers.

Use open-ended questions that foster conversation. Ask yourself, “Is this question more likely to foster conversation or hinder it? Is this open-ended? Consider the difference in tone when asking, “Are you praying with your spouse?” versus “How can you and your wife begin praying together more often?”

For specific ideas, see “35 Questions To Bring Your Mentoring Relationship Deeper” in the appendix.

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## C: Consider

Good mentors think carefully and biblically. Time is a critical part of the process; it can’t be rushed.

Think about ways to appropriately introduce Scripture, keeping with the pace at which God is working in your mentee’s life. Together, brainstorm next steps or other options they may want to evaluate.

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## E: Encourage

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Mentors hold tremendous power to highlight a mentee’s progress and celebrate their successes!

- *Acknowledge* another person’s circumstances.
- *Believe* in them.
- *Cheer* them on.



# Spiritual Listening: Creating Sacred Space for Genuine Dialogue

By Janel Breitenstein

It was a time of spiritual darkness for me.

My family was moving back from Africa to the United States. I felt anything but the writing-on-the-wall level of communication I'd hoped to hear from God about whether our work was done there. No clear, purposeful path forward for His next steps.

My spiritual alienation, and general bewilderment in life, were profound.

But looking back, I realize, like most of us, I craved more than answers. I longed for presence: for someone to sit with me in darkness, as perhaps God would.

Rather than someone prioritizing me *doing* the right things or doing things in a way that worked for them, I wanted someone to place

holiness on my inner being. To say, *What's happening right here, in your heart, is important. You're asking the right questions—and you need to lean into those. Live those questions with God.*

Author Tilden Edwards writes, "Being a spiritual friend is being the physician of the wounded soul ... He or she cleanses the wound, aligns the sundered parts, and gives it rest. That's all. The physician does *not* heal. He or she provides an *environment* for the dominant natural process of healing to take its course."

Thankfully, my husband created that kind of space for me. But in close relationships where that didn't happen, I admit to empathizing with Job when his friends offered glib, presumptive answers. In those moments, my soul's injury felt more profound than before.

How can we foster environments of spiritual listening? A few ideas.

## 1. More than providing solutions, travel with our God of the Journey

Telling our story is healing, connecting, and revealing. It allows the teller to be the authority on their personal hurt.

So when welcoming someone's soul with hopes to heal, begin with *listening to understand*. (As in, not *instructing*.) If we get their story wrong, we get our response wrong.

Repeatedly in the Bible (like on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24), Jesus asks questions to which He already knows the answer—because Jesus isn't just about solutions. He's present with a person's experience and journey, being there within our pain and questions.

Henri Nouwen writes in *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*, "Our lives are not problems to be solved but journeys to be taken with Jesus as our friend and finest guide."

In fact, God uses pain and questions—hunger He creates—to pull us both to Himself: "He humbled you and *let you hunger and fed you* with manna ... that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3, emphasis added).

So the goal isn't for the problems to just stop, the questions to be answered.

## 2. Help them sense God's themes in their lives.

In spiritual listening, rather than encouraging people in the direction that's

worked for us, we encourage them to listen for God's still, small voice. We want them to search for His unique action in their lives.

In *The Art of Spiritual Listening*, Alice Fryling advises, "Ask questions that will help the other discover the themes of God's whisperings in his or her life right now. Ask about the other's desires, fears, preferences, and needs ... Think about how you might feel if you were in the other person's shoes. What might you need or want that your friend is not mentioning?"

In our times together, we listen to both each other and to how God's working in us. We create nurturing, safe, quiet places where God can move and speak and encourage our mentees to do this on their own—using His Word as a guide.



## 3. Be all there.

It's hard to shape soul-friendly spaces for others when we don't experience them in our own lives—when we don't make time and hospitable environments to connect with God on our own.

We might go on "autopilot" with others, lapsing into what's easy for us rather than what the other person needs. We make the

right gestures or expressions or noises. But as far as “let love be genuine” (Romans 12:9)? We’re duplicitous.

In Philippians 2—in the famous passage where we’re told to, “in humility, count others more significant than yourselves”—go up two verses. Paul says that priority given to others blooms from our own comfort from God’s love, from His affection and sympathy. We are first loved and received by God. Then we can then set aside our inner grasping, our own agendas: *I must be seen as wise or helpful! I need to get this person saved! This person needs real solutions!*

We see Jesus set aside His own agenda on the way to Jairus’ home for the sake of the woman plagued by blood (see Mark 5). He takes time to notice her in a crowd, acknowledging her struggle and offering compassion, healing, and peace.

Our presence with others reflects God’s presence with them, the God who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

#### 4. Help them discover more of the story.

We’re all shaped not just by what happens, but our interpretation of the experience.

Imagine you discover a computer from 1977 assembled in someone’s garage. Candidate for the dump, right? Then, you find signatures on it: Steve Wozniak. Steve Jobs.

One of these computers sold for \$650,000.

*We encounter different experiences based on the story we’re told.* Our narratives matter intensely. Pastor Timothy Keller points out that a just-delivered baby wails when pulled

from its warm cocoon. She has no idea everyone in the room is there for her well-being; that delivery was a critical next step.

Spiritual listening helps others reframe their narrative when necessary to sense God’s presence. Because by default, we associate pain with isolation.

Jeremiah 17:9 says our hearts are deceitful and “sick”; who can understand them? And Paul mentions that though his conscience is clear, it doesn’t make him innocent (1 Corinthians 4:4). Spiritual listening, delicately as removing something from someone’s eye (Matthew 7:3-5), exposes different sides of the story.

This can happen with thoughtful questions.

- *How’s this different from what you expected?*
- *How do you sense God’s presence right now?*
- *What’s the value you’ve been trying to protect? (Could this become too important or hurt someone else in the process?)*
- *What do you think was \_\_\_\_\_’s perspective on this?*

Spiritual listening has a way of orienting our attention to God in the middle of real-life circumstances—and helping each other surrender to Him with open hands. It’s a chance to be “Jesus with jeans on” as you explore His responses to your lives. A chance to let someone touch, hear, and see how Jesus might be with them in this moment.

How could your listening help someone heal?



# Tips for Mentoring Well as a Couple

- Pray together beforehand, and perhaps a few times a week for your mentees. Prayer unites us to each other and God's heart for your mentees—and continues to bend His heart to your cause (Matthew 18:19).
- Just like the rest of marriage, mentoring together takes time. It's a bit like a three-legged race. Stumbling over each other doesn't mean you should quit. In virtually no part of life can you expect to be at "expert" level upon beginning.
- Learn to ask good questions of each other after your mentoring time, analyzing with tenderness and appreciation your wins as a couple and as individuals. Land on one aspect for each of you to *request* the other work on. Don't kill the situation with inspection! Just get a helpful overview on how to move forward with what works and what doesn't.
- Don't overlook praising what your spouse does right after your mentor time. All of us need to be reminded our spouse witnesses our value as a teammate and that we can do the task God's asked of us.
- It can be embarrassing to "mess up" as a couple in front of someone you're expected to mentor. But this is where deep humility and an understanding of the Gospel can actually triumph. It's an opportunity to show each other grace. Laugh at your foibles. Demonstrate you're a "real" couple whose worth is in Jesus, not performance or superiority or perfection. (Perfection belongs to God!) That's a powerful lesson for any mentee.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses as individuals *and* as a couple (see "How Can I Anticipate My Areas of Strength and Weakness?") For example, are you big on telling the truth as a couple but struggle to communicate your compassion?
- Allow your spouse to lead in their area of strength. Rather than taking over in your own area of strength, help your spouse shine. (For example, if your spouse is an introvert, create space for them to be slower to respond or piece together thoughts. Direct questions to them so their thoughts can be heard.)
- Spend quality time with your mentees to build rapport and a sense of sheer fun. Have them over for dinner or a game night to let them get the feel for your home and marriage in real life. Other times you can split up by gender for more intimate conversation and to get a bit of inside scoop on each spouse's perspective.

# Questions To Deepen Your Mentoring Relationship

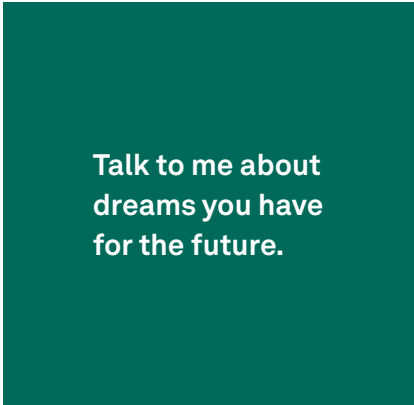
By Janel Breitenstein

Remember when your mom wouldn't let you snack before a meal because it would spoil your dinner?

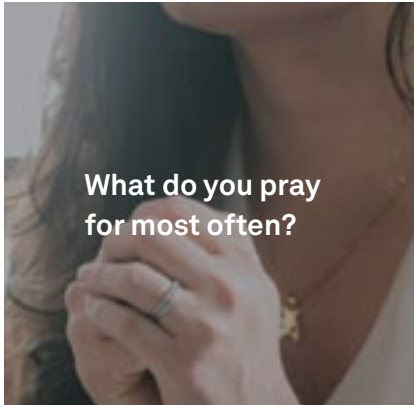
Let's just say our speed-of-light culture and social media can be a lot like Cheetos. They make us feel like we're getting fed socially, but in reality, a 140-character tweet or a status update can be full of a lot of air and artificial flavoring.

Wondering how to take your mentoring relationship a little deeper?


We've compiled some questions to help you get to the stuff that matters. Grab a cup of coffee, start with small talk, and then try a few of these.



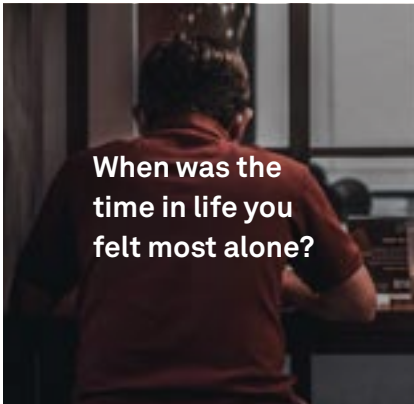
Talk to me about dreams you have for the future.



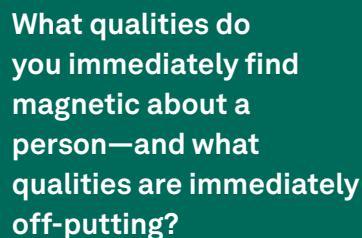
What do you pray for most often?



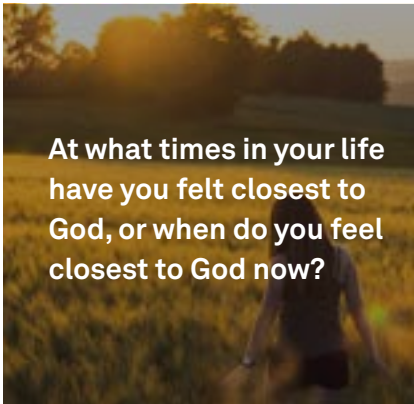
What's God been doing in you lately?



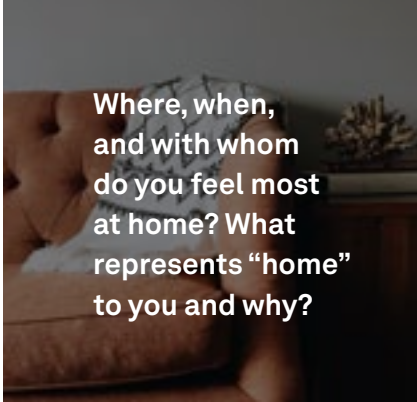
When was the time in life you felt most alone?



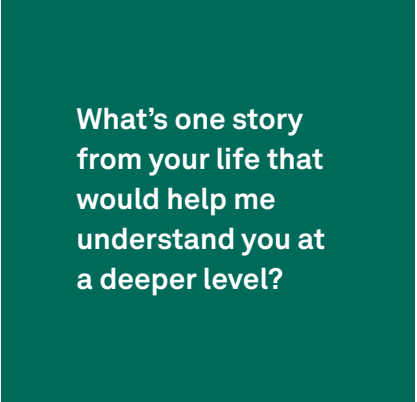
What qualities do you immediately find magnetic about a person—and what qualities are immediately off-putting?




At what times in your life have you felt closest to God, or when do you feel closest to God now?



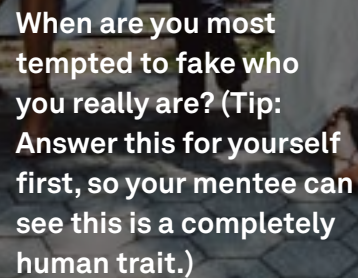
Where, when, and with whom do you feel most at home? What represents “home” to you and why?



What’s one story from your life that would help me understand you at a deeper level?



What kind of mentor and friend do you need? What could I do, practically speaking, to be a truer friend to you?



When are you most tempted to fake who you really are? (Tip: Answer this for yourself first, so your mentee can see this is a completely human trait.)

## REMEMBER: Genuine Conversation...

- builds on our own authenticity and vulnerability.
- practices reflective listening.
- sets aside our own agendas.
- seeks real understanding.
- listens more than it responds.
- is comfortable with others being “in process,” with silence, and with deep emotion; it does not always seek to fix, advise, or solve.
- seeks to love the other person well—not meet our own need to be known as a counselor or confidante or to “win the other person over.”
- Assumes the best about someone until able to gather more information; makes “charitable judgments.”

# Do I Need To Have All the Answers?

By Carlos Santiago



The phone rang, and I didn't even need to check who it was.

Todd had gotten into the habit of calling me at the most inopportune times. My wife looked at me across the dinner table. "Todd?" She asked.

I gave her an "I'm sorry" look as I quickly walked to our bedroom to take the call in private, leaving my dinner and family at the table.

As Todd explained his latest crisis, I asked him about the advice I had given him in our previous conversations.

"I didn't try what you suggested, but this is different. I *really* need your help now."

As I began another hours-long conversation, I realized I had fallen into a destructive cycle. Todd would get into a crisis, ask for help, listen to my advice, feel better, not implement any of the suggestions I made, and repeat.

I was taking more responsibility for Todd's life than he was.

We must be careful not to assume roles that are not ours. We can't take on the responsibility

of solving their problems. It is the Holy Spirit's role to convict people of sin and give them the power to change, not ours. Our job is to point people to God.

As a fixer by nature, part of me loved finding solutions to Todd's problems. But I had taken the Holy Spirit's place in his life, and that wasn't good for either of us. I had to learn to *resist the urge to be the hero and let God be God*.

Our relationship took a turn for the better when I learned to embrace a very simple yet completely foreign phrase for me: "I don't know."

By not providing Todd with easy answers, I forced him to do the work of figuring it out himself. He began to pray about his situation and started searching the Scriptures for insight.

The more Todd looked to God for answers, the less he needed me. Part of me missed being seen as the hero, but he didn't need me to be his savior. Through the process, he discovered a better one.

# What About Healthy Gender-Related Boundaries?

By Carlos Santiago



I sat in the church lobby between services. I had been at church since 7 a.m. and wouldn't be leaving until 2:30 that afternoon.

A woman across from me asked for advice.

It was my third "chance encounter" with this particular woman, and I was starting to sense "chance" had little to do with it. I made an excuse to get up and returned a few minutes later with my wife.

"So, tell me again," I said. "How can we help you?"

Barring some professional situations, it's never a good idea to mentor someone of the opposite sex. Even if you think there's no possible way

either of you could fall into temptation, it's not worth the risk. Desire is often more related to relational and emotional intimacy than physical attraction.

Understanding, compassion, availability, and genuine interest in your mentee are critical elements of a successful mentoring relationship. But they can also serve as seeds for sexual desire. Even if you feel no temptation, there is no way to know what is going on in the heart of the other person.

If there is a person of the opposite gender talking to you a lot, redirect them to a mature believer of the same gender.



Wondering how you'll know when a mentoring relationship has run its course? A few ideas.

- **Your relationship reached a pre-determined goal.** The mentee wanted help for the first six months of homeschooling, to prepare for living overseas, to get out of debt, etc.
- **Your relationship reached the “probation” time you both agreed to try out, and every meeting felt like pulling teeth with Celine Dion on loudspeaker.**

Put the ball in your mentee's court: “I know we said we'd try this for three months, so before we go further, I want to get your feedback. Is this something that still works with your needs and schedule and lifestyle? It's okay if it doesn't.”

If your mentee seems unflagged by what feels like a lack of chemistry, gently articulate your concerns: “Sometimes I see you staring off into the distance or avoiding my questions. I would love for you to be in a relationship where you don't feel constantly uncomfortable or alienated. Do you mind telling me more about what this experience has been like for you—both what you've liked and what you haven't?”

- **You feel like you've worked yourself out of a job, so to speak—an ideal scenario.**

Your mentee is ready to confidently lead others or succeed in this area of life, and you feel like they've got a firm grasp on key areas of maturity. Again, as long as you have capacity, ask your mentee their opinion: Is this relationship still beneficial for them? Or do they feel ready to move on?

- **Time, geography, capacity, or another obstacle intervenes.**

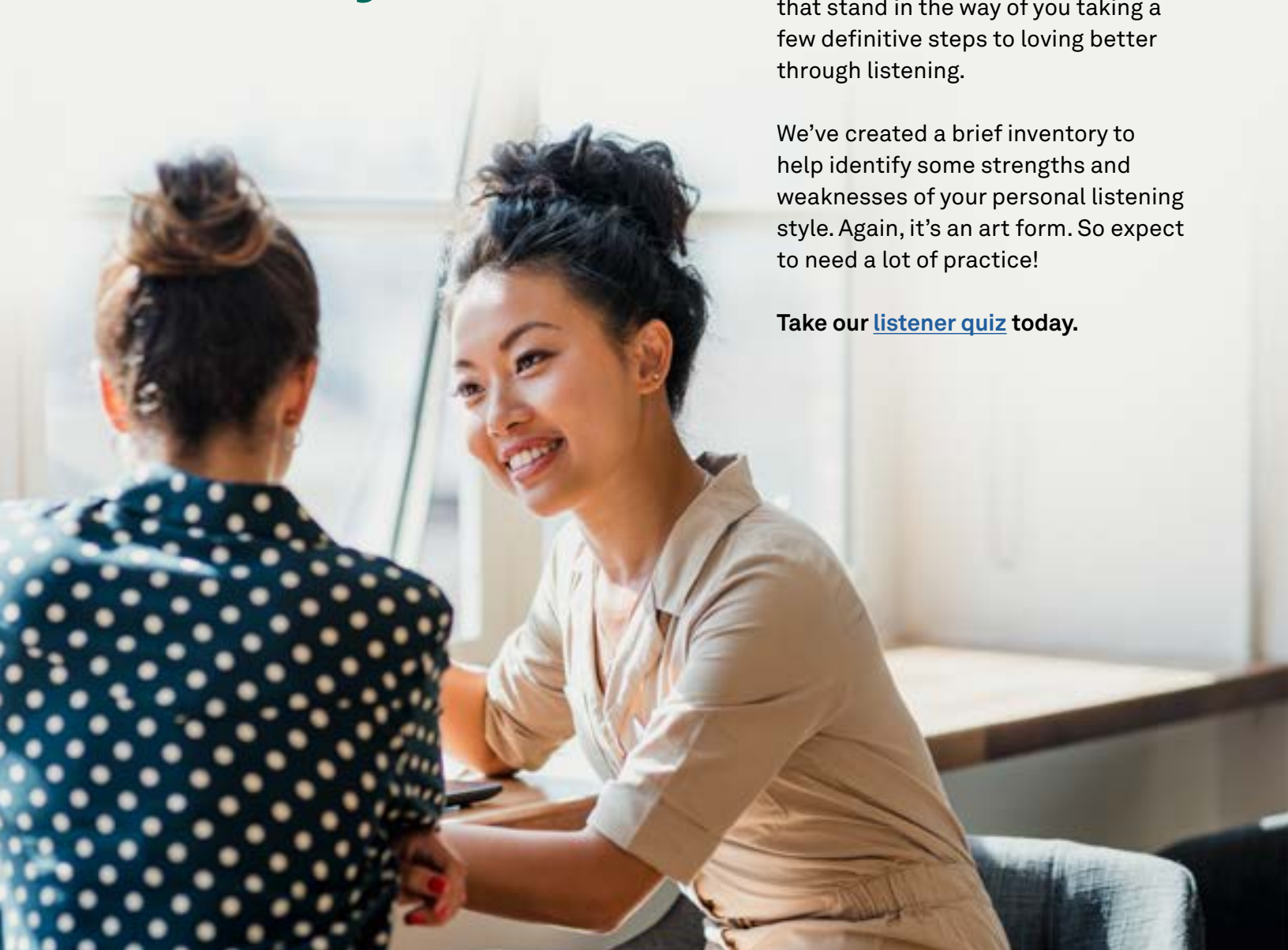
One of you is moving away, one needs a break because of a life event, etc. It's okay to say, “I need a break for awhile” or even “I need to pull back on some things in my life so I can say 'yes' to some big priorities right now.”

# Quiz: Are You a Good Listener? 20 Ways To Tell

In a world where communication happens at the speed of light and we feel more “connected” after a 140-character tweet—listening is a dying artform. Few of us possess the time or training to receive the stories of those around us. But don’t let that stand in the way of you taking a few definitive steps to loving better through listening.

We’ve created a brief inventory to help identify some strengths and weaknesses of your personal listening style. Again, it’s an art form. So expect to need a lot of practice!

Take our [listener quiz](#) today.



**Bonus:** Have your spouse take this to evaluate you as a listener and compare notes.

# Mentoring: Friendship on Steroids

By Janel Breitenstein

I never thought mentoring could get me in such killer shape.

Though I've enjoyed my share of decaf frappuccinos while mentoring, a lot of these relationships (however informal) start with a text: "Wanna walk?"

If only mentoring came with a pedometer. My purple running shoes crush a lot of miles around my small town—and with those miles, my friendships have accumulated some decent range, too. The metaphor of sharing the journey isn't lost on me.

(Maybe we sense walking does more than tone our legs? [Walking apparently](#) "improves self-perception and self-esteem, mood and sleep quality, and it reduces stress, anxiety and fatigue. Physically active people have up to a 30% reduced risk of becoming depressed.")

There's solid biblical precedent for both mentoring and being mentored (Titus 2:2-5). Even for those of us in thriving marriages,

it's not hard to see our marriages can't heft all of our emotional weight. Someone once recommended I have both a "Paul" (a mentor) and a "Timothy" (a mentee) in my life, along with a "Barnabas," to encourage me alongside.

But most of my mentor-ish relationships aren't formal. They're just women reaching out for someone to listen well. Ask good questions. Intentionally process alongside. Help them find the Holy Spirit in the chaos.

## Friendship on Steroids

In my experience, mentoring is friendship on steroids: purposeful, curious, God-inviting friendship. Though everyone needs small talk to warm them up, I'm not really the "Did you hear what J. Lo wore?" or "What's the best HIIT app?" type.

When mentoring, as soon as it's comfortable, I like to tug our dialogue out of the shallow end. I want to get to how our inner beings, our true selves, are interacting with the world around us.



If you're frustrated about a conversation with your mom, why did it rub you the wrong way? What did you feel, and with what value of yours did it conflict?

If you're army-crawling through parent-anger, what's the emotion beneath your anger: Fear? Disappointment? Hurt? Injustice? Rejection?

## Where Are You?

God's questions to people in Scripture offer superb patterns for how He wants me to relate. Take God's question to Adam and Eve: "Where are you?" Sometimes that's a great place to start a mentoring conversation.

*Where's your heart at right now? What do you feel like hiding from? Why did that conversation with your mom rub you the wrong way?*

Mentoring requires me to constantly learn how to listen more with my whole heart and extend women God's hospitality for their souls. Because telling our stories is one of the first steps to healing. There's something in receiving a story that communicates "God with us"; that says, *You're not alone. And What God is doing here in your heart, in your perspective, matters.*

First John 1:1 speaks of sharing how we're experiencing and interacting with God "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life." The passage speaks of how sharing makes our joy complete.

But sometimes I'm catching that pilgrimage mid-journey, before either of us understands the ultimate joy God's creating—like my friend, a mother of three who lost her husband to

cancer. I may be more of a midwife for grief or anger or disappointment, just shaking my head alongside them and helping them emotionally breathe through the pain.

## How Would God Care for You?

See, God draws direct lines between how I love Him and how I care for people made in His image (Matthew 22:37-39, 25:40-45; James 3:10). So it can be good to ask myself, "If this person were Jesus, how would I care for them?" And how did Jesus care for those around Him?

For mentoring, I see parallels throughout Jesus' life. He spends quality time with people—eating, drinking (I'm hearing Starbucks?), attending social events, (hey!) walking. He listens to and addresses their gripping fears, base desires (Luke 22:24-30), and persistent questions. He humbly serves them (John 13:1-17). He even invites them into his own moments of sorrow and hurt (Matthew 26:38).





### “Just show up”?

Part of friendship is yes, just showing up. Just being there. Personally, I find the tough part is to show up with my whole self.

Being “all there” means setting aside my kids’ squabbling before I left, or my deadlines at work, or my own snap judgments when I’m irritable. At times, it means setting aside my own pain, so I can fully receive theirs.

That doesn’t mean we don’t pursue mutual relationships when we’re mentoring. Think of the perfect circle of community of the Trinity, and the way the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit give and receive love from each other. But whether we receive from others or not, mentoring does mean creating capacity to be present, to “let love be genuine” (Romans 12:9).

Mentoring also means we show up with our own stories as mentors: our battles over dividing household tasks with a spouse, or infertility, or dealing with a past abortion. And this includes battles not yet neatly conquered within us.

### Mentoring = Making Disciples

Before Jesus left earth, He commissioned His followers to make disciples—and that’s mentoring in a nutshell. Mentoring also echoes Deuteronomy 6, where God says we “shall talk of [His commands] when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (verse 6).

Mentoring kneads God’s perspective into how I respond to my child’s learning disorder, how I spend my Saturdays, and, yeah, maybe even what celebrities or workouts I pay attention to (...or don’t). Mentoring helps people work out what it looks like to follow Jesus at their address, with their in-laws, or with their proclivity for shoe shopping.

And we’re *all* called to make disciples. So get out there: log some miles (literally or figuratively) as you both power-walk toward Christ.