
The Sharpen Guide to Spiritual Mentoring

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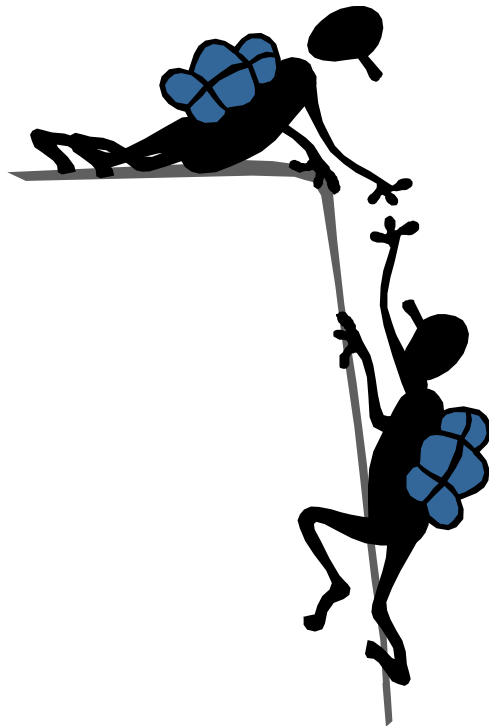
NOTES**CONTENTS:**

So you are a Spiritual Mentor?	4
What is Spiritual Mentoring?	5
How Do Mentoring Relationships Begin?	6
Mentor-Initiated Relationships	6
Student-Initiated Relationships	6
Working out a Covenant	7
Overview of a First Meeting	7
What Happens in a Mentoring Meeting?	8
Good, Safe Space	8
Good Listening	8
Good Questions	8
Good Advice	9
Good Study	9
Good Prayer	9
How Do Mentoring Relationships Deepen?	10
Time	10
Informal Meetings	10
Troubleshooting Tips	11-12
Lead on!	13
Appendices: Suggested Sessions and Questions	14-16
Faith Journey/Personal Credo	
Character/goals/leadership	
Otherness/Diversity—culture, faith	
Residence Hall Life—roommates, friends, loneliness	
Family	
Vocation	
Routines/Time Management/Priorities	
Dating/Sex	
Christian ethics and responsibilities	
Entertainment	
New Experiences/Interests	
Success and Failure	
Identity/Personality	

CONSIDERING SPIRITUAL MENTORING?

Welcome! You may have recognized that many young people in our culture suffer from a dearth of spiritual relationships with mature adults. This often results in poor decision-making and poor models for relationships. Having a mentor empowers young people to direct their lives in a righteous manner. But they are not the only ones to benefit. When you mentor, you find great satisfaction in the lessons God has taught you in life, and recognize that you have tremendous power and responsibility to shape the next generation.

A few words about this guide: it is primarily intended for one-on-one relationships, but you can easily adapt it for groups. Although it is undergirded by research and experience, in the interest of brevity we have deliberately steered away from theory and anecdotal support. We trust it will be more useful to you this way. We trust God will do wonderful and powerful things through you! Blessings!



Questions about the Future:

1. What quality in yourself would you like to develop or see God change this year?
2. What is one relationship in your life you would like to see God strengthen, and how might this happen?
3. What is one anxiety you have about the future and how do you deal with it?
4. What do you anticipate happening in your life one year from now?
5. In what ways do you hope things will change for your family in the year ahead?
6. If God could do anything through you during the next decade, what would you hope to do?
7. How would you like to be remembered by your friends and family?
8. Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Questions about the Christian Life:

1. Using only 3 minutes, how would you describe to someone the difference Christ has made in your life?
2. If someone on the plane were to ask, "How do you know who God is?" what would you say?
3. What does the Cross mean to you?
4. SPU talks a lot about "engaging the culture with the Gospel." What does this mean to you, and what's one way you'd like to engage our culture?
5. In the Christian walk, what place does "failure" have in it?
6. We are called in Scripture to "always be ready to give an account for the hope that is within us." How would you describe to someone the nature of your hope for the future?

APPENDICES, CONT.

Vocation/ Calling from God

(Submitted by Doug Koskela, School of Theology)

- How does God speak? What do Scripture, experience, and the testimony of other Christians have to say about this question?
- What are some of the ways in which you have heard God speak?
- What are some dimensions of your vocation right now? What do you feel “called to” at the moment? (student, friend, family member, church member, employee, etc.)
- What questions about your calling for the future do you think about the most?
- What concrete steps are you taking to address these questions?
- What direction(s) do you feel called to pursue in the future? How sure or clear about these?
- Who or what are some untapped resources that would be helpful in discerning and responding to your life’s calling?
- How “specific” do you expect God’s guidance to be? Do you believe that God calls us to one particular blueprint (career, marriage partner, location, etc), or do you believe that God leaves us some measure of freedom in such decisions?
- Who do you want to be in 5 years? In 10 years? In 25 years?

Questions about the Present:

1. What is your major, and why have you selected it?
2. What do you find most helpful, and what is most difficult about being a student/staff member at SPU?
3. What part of your life right now do you find enjoyable, and what is difficult?
4. How would you use one unexpected hour of free time today?
5. If you could travel internationally, where would you go and why?
6. What is something good that someone did for you this week?
7. What have you worried about this week?
8. Tell me one factual thing about yourself, and one false thing. I will try to guess which is which.
9. What is your family like?

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MENTORING?

(Adapted from Keith Anderson and Randy Reese, Spiritual Mentoring, Intervarsity Press, 1999)

Spiritual mentoring is a relationship between mentor, mentee and the Holy Spirit. Through this relationship, the mentee seeks to discover what God is already doing in his or her life, and thereby grow in friendship with God, identity in God, and awareness of God’s call.

Purposes of this relationship:

- To enhance intimacy with God, ultimate identity and unique voice.
- To recognize God’s action in the mentee’s life.
- To develop character.
- To discern God’s direction in decision-making.
- To help make life-changing decisions.

What are some characteristics of a mentor?

- One who creates a hospitable space of trust and intimacy.
- One who is able to discern God’s action in the mentee.
- One who recognizes potential in people.
- One who is affirmed by others as having a life worthy of emulation.
- One who seeks to live a life of authentic holiness, spiritual maturity, biblical knowledge and wisdom.
- One who is familiar with contemplative prayer, listening and other spiritual disciplines.

Who is the mentee?

- One who desires spiritual growth and maturity.
- One who wants to ask questions about self, life, and God.
- One who is vulnerable in sharing intimate issues of life.
- One who is responsive and respectful to the directives of the mentor.

HOW DO MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS BEGIN?

(Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*)

The idea of mentoring is intriguing to many people. The idea of *beginning* a mentoring relationship is often intimidating. Here's some help:

Mentor-Initiated Relationships: If you are considering initiating a relationship yourself, keep these points in mind:

Pay attention to spiritual attraction – consider the characteristics of mentees above. Have you ever been excited upon seeing those qualities in particular students? Have you ever been excited about bringing those qualities out of a particular student? Could this be the movement of the Spirit?

Approach the student openly and clearly – You may feel the term “spiritual mentoring” could be intimidating to a student. Fair enough. Feel free to use your own terminology. Above all, be clear about your hopes for the relationship. If you are unclear, the relationship will likely be unfruitful or misunderstood.

Student-Initiated Relationships:

“Millennial” students (those born after 1981) are far more likely to approach you than their forebears. If you are curious about the student’s desires, call an introductory meeting and gently ask questions like these:

Why me? What motivated you to consider me as a mentor? What do you know or think you know about me that leads you here?

Why you? Why do you want to do this? What inspired it (sermon, class, article)? What do you want to get out of it? *What’s in it for you?*

Why now? If our discussions unearth something you need to change, are you ready? (Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*).

Competence

- What skills do I bring to my leadership role? Weaknesses?
- What unique tasks must I perform in order to do my job well?
- What skills do I need to develop to perform those tasks? What skills do I need to develop to improve my overall effectiveness as a leader in general? What resources are available to me in order to improve these skills?

Dating/Sex

Advice from David Lutz, therapist and group leader for SPU Counseling Center.

“The assumption I always make with Christian college students is that if they are dating someone they’re probably struggling in the area of sexuality. And if they aren’t dating, I assume they wish they were. So I teach teachers to be ‘open ended and open hearted.’ The atmosphere of safety and affirmation is key. Is the student sure that this mentor will accept them where they are, affirm where they are, and keep things confidential? Then I suggest the mentor start with, ‘So how’s your dating life?’ If they say, ‘Good.’ Then I go on the who, what, when, where. In time, when safety and affirmation is built up, then I trust the student will usually bring up sex first. If they don’t and I sense they want to, I’ll ask them.”

Movies

(Submitted by Jeffrey Overstreet, on-line Film Editor for *Christianity Today*. “Some of these movies have admirable characters, while others give us examples of flawed characters who can teach us something by their mistakes.”)

- A Man for All Seasons:** St. Thomas More was a successful, attractive man who was able to give up society and success when it became incompatible with virtue.
- To Kill a Mockingbird:** Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck) is a great father and a great lawyer, willing to put his career and reputation on the line to stand up for what is right.
- The Rookie** – Dennis Quaid plays a man who respects wife, children, father, and community. In turn, the community rallies around him and helps him achieve his dream.
- Chariots of Fire** - Eric Liddel's fine example of dedication to excellence and devotion to God.
- Steve:** A documentarian who decides to get involved in the life of a troubled young man, and who stays involved as his young friend plunges toward prison.
- The Insider:** Two men (Al Pacino and Russell Crowe) are tested on how much they will risk in order to make the truth known about tobacco companies.
- What's Eating Gilbert Grape?** - Young Gilbert (Johnny Depp) avoids his own impulses in order to shoulder the “heavy” burden of his family.
- Master and Commander** - A good film about ego and friendship in leadership.
- The Mission** - Two immensely contrasting portraits of men attempting to be

APPENDICES:

Personal Credo

Invite your mentee to take an hour and write out as specifically as possible what he or she believes. They should write in simple language that a non-Christian could understand. The creed should touch on:

- God: Who is God the Father, Who is Jesus Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit?
 - What is sin? What is salvation? How are we saved?
 - What is holiness? Does a Christian sin after salvation?
 - What is worship? What is prayer?
 - What is the church? Is the church important? Why?
 - What is the Bible? How does it reveal God to us? Why is it important?
 - How do our beliefs influence our lives? Do we live according to what we believe, or believe according to how we live?
- What does the creation teach us about God? How much can the world reveal to us about God? How does God teach us to interact with his creation?

Faith Journey

Invite your mentee to write out his faith journey. Ask him to answer these questions: How did you come to faith? Would you currently describe yourself as a believer? Who are the important people in your faith development? What were significant events in your faith journey? What role did your family play in his faith? What crises in life or in belief have you faced? How is God blessing you at this point in his life? What questions do you have?

Character Goals/ Leadership Evaluation

Character

- What kind of person do I want to be?
- What kind of conduct would best reflect the qualities I've identified?
- How might those traits contribute to fulfilling my specific responsibilities?

Role

- What role do you and/or your organization play on campus?
- What is the scope of your organization's influence and responsibility on campus?
- Are you or your organization guided by a mission statement? What is it?

Working out a covenant – Once the relationship is initiated, the next step is to help it solidify. One excellent way to do this is through producing a covenant together. A covenant will help you clarify your goals and purpose, time and commitment, and will keep you from feeling like the relationship “never went anywhere”. For purposes of clear articulation and understanding, we recommend writing a covenant. However, an informal, verbal covenant can also be successful.

This covenant example gives several options for “getting at” the essence of your meeting. Choose the language that works best for you.

Mentoring Covenant	
We commit to the following:	
The purpose of our meetings is _____	
The spiritual goals we want to work on are _____	
The personal life goals we want to work on are _____	
The focus of our meetings (ex. study, prayer, discussion, spiritual disciplines) is _____	
<i>For the student: As a result of these meetings, how do you want to be different?</i>	

We agree to prioritize these meetings and meet regularly at _____	
We agree to commit to meet for _____ weeks together, with a time to re-evaluate, enter and exit after that time.	
We agree to pray regularly for each other.	
We agree to come prepared for our meetings.	
We agree to maintain confidentiality regarding prayer requests and personal sharing.	
_____ <i>Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>
_____ <i>Signature</i>	_____ <i>Date</i>

An overview for a first time meeting might look something like this:

- Introductions
- Overview of expectations/hopes (both mentor and mentee share)
- Commitment Discussion and decision
- Set weekly time to meet
- Review of expectations, commitment decided upon

WHAT HAPPENS IN A MENTORING MEETING?

Good, Safe Space

A good “space” for mentoring must be safe and confidential. The mentee must feel sure that what he says in your meeting will not go beyond your meeting. Obviously, if someone shares a serious crisis or critical need, you may need to refer him for professional counsel. See the list at the end this guide for helpful SPU resources.

Good Listening

Listening is an art. Eye contact, body language and all non-verbal signs are central to listening. Listening also involves summarizing, clarifying, paraphrasing or reflecting the thoughts and feelings expressed by the speaker. Summarizing what your mentee has said and affirming him during the course of your meeting will build confidence and trust, especially in the early days.

Good Questions

The art of asking good questions is as challenging as that of being a good listener. The appendices in the back of this guide share many great questions, topically arranged.

- *Ask appropriate questions.* Consider the depth of commitment and trust within your relationship. Ask questions that are appropriate to the depth. It will not work to pry too deeply at the beginning. Conversely, if you are asking superficial questions after you have been meeting for a significant time, your meetings will be bland. Try to gently guide the relationship forward in each session. Let your questions slowly grow towards vulnerability and openness.
- *Ask focused questions.* Get to the heart of the issue being explored
- *Ask open-ended questions.* Elicit discussion. Questions that simply fill in the blank, or can be answered by yes’ or no’, will not lead anywhere.
- *Ask “moderate” questions.* Asking for “superlatives” creates unnecessary anxiety on the mentee. For example, instead of asking “what was the *best*, *most* significant, *most* meaningful event in your childhood,” ask, “what was a good, meaningful, or significant event.”
- *Ask clarifying questions.* Give your mentee the opportunity to restate what he has said so that you might grasp more fully his intent. Encourage him to explain why he thinks what he does, or what brought him to that conclusion.

GO MENTOR!

Thank you for your time and energy given to mentoring here at SPU. May God grant you the patience, wisdom, discernment and joy of being a wonderful mentor!

RESOURCES:

University Ministries and The Center for Worship Staff and contact information:

Matthew Koenig	286-7242
Residence Life Office:	281-2043
SPU Counseling Center:	281-2657

OTHER TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS:

Symptom	Problem	Approaches
Mentee comes late	Pattern is established of not starting on time	Begin on time and discuss the issue with your mentee.
Mentee doesn't come prepared	Possibly the expectations are too high, or his commitment is too low	Review and evaluate your commitments. Make a change if expectations are too high or decide together how to meet current expectations.
Mentee doesn't talk.	Possibly the questions are either too hard or too obvious; or mentor is not allowing enough silence	Be patient with silence. Review "good questions and good advice" above.
Mentee talks too much.	Possibly because of impatience, enthusiasm, dogmatism, or dislike of silence	Explain the need for reflection and conversation. Ask mentee to reflect for a minute in silence to a question.
Disagreement to the point of conflict about theology, interpretation, issues	Different backgrounds, perspectives, or lack of tolerance	Remind mentee how much we have to learn from different perspectives and how much richer the relationship will be as you engage in dialogue.
Prayer is stifled	Lack of trust; verbal public prayer may be a new experience; focus of prayer time unclear	Vary the approaches to prayer-silent, one word, sentence prayers; pray about one specific topic.
Sharing is superficial	Mentor may not be setting example; questions may be unclear	Be open in your own sharing; ask for specifics in mentee's sharing. Share something a bit more vulnerable than the current level of vulnerability. You will set the model.
Mentee in significant crisis	Mentee is facing issues that are beyond the scope and expertise of mentor	Talk candidly with your mentee; explore other resources for help; encourage him to engage those resources; intensify your commitment to prayer; contact Campus Ministries staff, Residence Life Staff or Counseling Staff for support.

Good Advice

Your student desires to meet with you, hear your perspective and gain your advice. You may feel that you do not have all the answers and that your life is sometimes out of control! Still, you are a few steps ahead of your mentee. Do not be afraid to counsel and advise your student. Conversely, beware of inappropriate advice-giving. This may be a particular danger for professors who are gifted in teaching and problem-solving. In many cases, when a person discloses a personal struggle, the most helpful response is often to listen, ask questions, and pray together—rather than seeking to solve it.

Good Study

Studying a book together is a long-standing method of mentoring. Choose a book from the Bible, a novel, biography, devotional or theological study. Make sure it interests you both and is appropriate for the student's knowledge level.

Good Prayer

Prayer is essential if the mentoring relationship is to succeed in discerning what God is doing in the life of the mentee. Choose a form of prayer that is comfortable for you both—spontaneous open prayer, or guided prayer from a prayer book.

Also, pray regularly for each person you are mentoring outside of your meetings. There is no better way to heighten your spiritual awareness and decrease your spiritual anxiety.

HOW DO RELATIONSHIPS DEEPEN?

Time

In addition to prayer and commitment, an essential ingredient of a deepening relationship is time. Be patient, and don't expect too much too soon.

Informal Meetings

Another essential, but overlooked, ingredient is informal gatherings. Involvement outside of your committed time is not "required", but informal meetings will give your relationship a much-needed aspect of *fun*. Make an informal meeting out of something you are already doing—invite your mentee over for dinner; attend an SPU athletic event, art exhibit, music production, play, community convocation or worship event. Have your mentee invite you as a guest to a residence hall function. One thing is certain: the SPU master calendar always has something going on.

Reflection

Briefly describe the outcome of your time together after each meeting. Lift it up in prayer over the next week and briefly review it before your next meeting. It will help your relationship to feel consistent, not sporadic.

TROUBLE-SHOOTING

What are appropriate boundaries between mentor and mentee?

Sometimes professors and staff worry over risks associated with a mentoring relationship. Will a mentor be suspected of bias if grading a mentee? Will the relationship be reputed to have sexual content? ***These are serious questions, but must not be allowed to dissuade us from mentoring.***

Here are some helpful principles:

- The concern is legitimate. Before entering into a mentoring relationship, a potential mentor should search his heart for areas of temptation. If there is potential for spiritual, emotional, or sexual abuse, the mentor needs healing before mentoring another.
- Stay in communication with other mentors. Share your experiences, struggles and questions.
- Put meeting times and places on your calendar. Avoid showing any sign of secrecy.
- Register your mentoring with the Rev. Matthew Koenig, Associate Director, University Ministries, ext. 7242. You will be provided with encouragement and accountability.

How much should a mentor share?

Your mentee will benefit from knowing you are a real person. If you share personal information or issues, you may find that your mentee opens up as well. Avoid gossip and complaining. Gossip is anything that could hurt another member of the SPU community, whether true or false. Complaining is letting your own concerns and worries intrude on the goal of the mentoring relationship: to discover God's work in the mentee.