

Go Deeper

A Discipleship Mentoring Process

What is a Discipleship Mentor?

Your own mentor

Most of us have had someone in our lives who helped us to grow in our faith. It could be a parent, a friend, an uncle or aunt, a coach, a teacher, a priest or deacon. Maybe it was our godparent or confirmation sponsor. Whoever it was, they were a significant part of our faith development. As we begin to reflect on mentoring, I want you to call that person to mind. Take a few moments to jot down some notes about your relationship with that person using the space below. Who were they? What about them influenced you?

As you reflect, you may discover that mentoring is primarily about *relationship*. It is about a strong relationship with God and a growing relationship with the disciple. Your mentor helped you to grow in faith, at least in part, because they invested in these two critical relationships (with God and with you). Are you willing to do the same for the disciple who has chosen you?

You are called

As part of the discipleship process, each high school disciple selects a mentor. This mentor is someone they respect. It is a person who they would like to talk about God with. *That person is you!* You may be saying to yourself, “I’m not qualified to be a mentor. My faith is still very much a work in progress.” Of course that is true. Mentor’s are not required to be perfect. They are required to be willing. There is an old saying that God does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called. *One of our disciples saw something in you that spoke to them of faith. Are you willing to share your faith with them?*

A discipleship mentor is someone willing to say “yes” to the call to be in a relationship of faith with a younger person. You will be amazed at what can happen when we say “yes” to the call. For “nothing is impossible with God” (Lk. 1:37)!

How to be a FAITH mentor

There are all types of mentors in our lives. There are sports mentors, business mentors, or financial mentors. What does it mean to be a *faith* mentor?

Being a faith mentor is different than other forms of mentoring because it is rooted directly in our relationship with God. **A faith mentor is a mature disciple who walks with another disciple and helps them on the way of discipleship.**

There may be times when you discuss ideas, offer support, share information or teach skills, but the most valuable skills a mentor can develop are hospitality and listening.

Hospitality

“Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines.” - Henri Nouwen

Congratulations! You must already be doing this to be chosen as a faith mentor. Who you are and the way you live have already invited someone to ask you to be a mentor. Keep up the good work. Some ways to deepen hospitality:

- Pray daily for the disciple you are mentoring. Prayer is the power source that fuels this important relationship.
- Attend Mass and other faith activities (parish mission, living nativity, stations of the cross, parish festival, etc...) with the disciple
- Invite the disciple to dinner with your family or coffee with you
- Be present at events the disciple is engaged in (e.g. sporting events, concerts, etc...) and offer support
- Get to know the disciple’s family

Listening

“The heart of a fool is in his mouth, but the mouth of a wise man is in his heart.” - Ben Franklin

“... listen, that you may have life.” - Is. 55:3

Listening is at the core of the mentor/disciple relationship. It is one of the greatest gifts we can give another person. Listening takes concentration and effort. Some ways to deepen your listening include:

- Stop talking! It is tempting to continually offer advice or solve problems for the person you are mentoring. Do NOT do this, at least initially. Listen carefully, then, if they ask for advice, you can offer it.
- Accept the other person and what they say. When a disciple shares with the mentor, they are taking a risk. Be respectful of what they say and who they are.
- Empathize. Try to feel what the disciple is feeling as you listen.
- Ask questions for clarification. When there is a pause in the conversation ask questions and paraphrase what has been said to make sure you have understood the ideas and feelings.
- Allow time for sharing. Listening takes time, plan your meetings accordingly and don't try to “squeeze them in.”
- Allow space for silence. Do not be afraid to allow some silence into the conversation. Silence can build trust and intimacy and it can allow time for God's voice to be heard.

Basics of Faith Sharing

Faith sharing is a process in which people share stories of how God is active in their lives and the way they are responding to God's call. Faith sharing can be done in pairs or in larger groups. Your disciple will experience some faith sharing in the weekly discipleship sessions.

Faith sharing creates a sacred space where people can become **aware** of God's call, **articulate** their experience of God, and prepare to **act** on what they are experiencing. See “Faith Sharing for Mentors” below for a fuller description of the do's and don'ts of faith sharing.

The Monthly “Go Deeper” meeting

Before the meeting

- Set up the meeting with the disciple.
 - Plan about 1 hour.
 - It may take several tries to find a time that will work but be persistent.

- It is helpful to remind the disciple a day or two before your meeting as well. Some disciples are not used to keeping track of their calendar (especially younger disciples).
- Review your thoughts from the last meeting.
 - Was there something that you were going to do for the disciple? Make sure you have done it.
 - Were they concerned or worried about something or someone? Ask them about it when you meet.
 - What common interests do you have? Be ready to talk about it.
- Review the “Faith Sharing for Mentors” handout if needed to remind you of the focus of your conversation.
- Review the “Go Deeper” conversation handout. They can be found on the Faith Formation Page at the parish website: <http://ssrmparishes.org>
 - Read the entire handout, front and back.
 - Note any activities that you could suggest.

At the meeting

- Bring your bible (preferably your Catholic Youth Bible) to the meeting.
- Meet in a place where you will be able to talk freely. Often a “public” place like a coffee shop, church, park, restaurant, are good places to have a conversation and can be less intimidating.
- Ask the disciple how they are doing and follow-up from any previous conversations.
- Begin with prayer. In most cases, the mentor should lead the prayer found on the handout.
- Begin the faith conversation.
 - The mentor should take the lead in these conversations by sharing first and listening attentively.
 - Bring Scripture into the conversation by reading the Scripture passage provided once or twice and then sharing on the questions on the handout.
 - Allow the conversation to flow. Do not be afraid of silence.
- If time allows, discuss any interesting items from the “For Further Reflection and Discussion” on the back of the “Go Deeper” conversation handout.
- Close with the prayer suggestions from the handout.
- You and the disciple sign the back page
- Schedule the next meeting.

After the meeting

- Thank God for the gifts you have received from your conversation.
- Turn in the mentor conversation form to the parish office or the dropbox at church.
- Take note of any insights or concerns from the meeting and bring them to prayer or follow up if necessary.