

## Chapter Five Developing "Mentorable" Qualities

It was a dark and stormy night. Actually it was just dark. And late. Tricia and her husband, Randy, were sleeping soundly when they were awakened by the sound of cracking glass. She describes the incident: "Snow, our Siberian-husky-wannabe, barked and gyrated in the front yard. Something was definitely wrong. Our chainsaw shop, where Randy repaired chainsaws and sold outdoor equipment, sat 50 yards in front of our mobile home. Since our bedroom window faced the back of the shop, we slid it open a few inches, straining to hear for unusual noises over the dog's frantic yelping. Shuffling and scraping sounds told us someone was definitely in the building.

"Though scared, we weren't surprised. We had already lost thousands of dollars of merchandise in a previous break-in. But like most small-business owners in our rural Louisiana area, we couldn't afford insurance coverage or an alarm system.

### **Armed and Dangerous**

"Randy grabbed his clothes and a 38-special he kept socked away in the closet and GI Joe'd out the back door. Crouched on the floor in the dark, I managed to dial the sheriff, whispering the problem, since the bedroom window was still open.

"Meanwhile, Randy, by way of a wooded area adjoining our property, sneaked through the darkness, jumping into the ditch across from the building's front door where he took his watch. Eventually the guy would come out. And when he did, Randy was ready.

"There was just one problem. Snow, thrilled to see a familiar face, welcomed Randy with the gusto of a dog whose owner just returned from a month-long trip. She pounced, she bounced, she slurped. Randy, in a firm whisper (if there is such a thing), commanded her to stop. She ignored him and went on with her cavorting. A ditch, after all, was a perfect playground, and why was he being such a party-pooper? Randy whacked her and pinned her to the ground in a full Nelson.

"Back in the trailer, I listened and waited, alone with my thoughts. The eerie silence frightened me more than the previous noise. What if the intruder was armed and Randy got shot? And what about me? The back door stood open where Randy had made his hasty exit. I had no weapon, making me an easy target for the intruder's surly partner, who probably this very moment tiptoed through the darkness toward our home.

### **Armed and Ridiculous**

"It was more than I could bear. I patted my hands across the bedcovers until I found my housecoat, and slipped it on. Then, crawling on hands and knees, I inched my way to the closet, grabbing the first pair of shoes I touched. Determined to find out what was going on outside, I headed for the door.

"Then I remembered the surly guy, the intruder's partner, who now probably lurked just outside. How would I protect myself? In a stroke of genius, it came to me—the fire extinguisher! I pictured myself subduing the villain with a jet-propelled woosh of white foam. If nothing else, I was equipped with the element of surprise. Finding the extinguisher in its familiar place beside the bed, I shoved it under my arm and headed out to save my husband.

"I edged my way along the same wooded area Randy had used for his subterfuge. By the time I arrived at the front of the building, Randy had captured the would-be thief. Evidently, when the fellow, wearing a black felt hat with a lovely feather, exited, pushing a four-wheeler, Randy said, 'That's far enough. Put your hands up!' The man obliged, assuring Randy he was just looking for a phone. Randy responded, 'Get on the ground, hands above your head, or I'll have to shoot you!'

"About that time, the sheriff and his deputies screeched onto the scene, lights and sirens blaring. There Randy stood guarding the perpetrator, who lay face down, spread-eagle on the ground (hat with feather intact), and there I stood, proudly backing him up in my red velour housecoat, wedge stacked-heel shoes, with a fire extinguisher!"

The moral of the story: be prepared. Wishing for a mentor won't necessarily get you one, but "arming" yourself with the following character qualities will certainly improve your chances of finding the mentor you want!

### Eagerness to Learn

How much do you want to grow and learn? Someone who acts like a know-it-all is not open to being taught by another woman, nor will she likely find a woman who will offer to teach her. Every mentor enjoys walking alongside a mentee who yearns for knowledge and truth and eagerly learns what is taught.

In following chapters you'll assess needs in several areas of life. You may become aware of issues, habits, or hurts you never noticed before or that you thought were mastered long ago. Don't become discouraged. Look at your needs as opportunities for growing, healing, and maturing. An awareness of your needs actually is very helpful in finding a mentor. "More than once," says Tricia, "I've gotten a potential mentor to help me because I was frank about my needs. The mentor knew I was serious about learning and would accept her guidance because I was so eager to learn."

- **Circle a number below to rate your eagerness to learn on a scale of "1" (not eager) to "10" (very eager).**

1--2--3--4--5--6--7--8--9--10

### Gentleness

Remember that older women often feel intimidated by younger women. Edna said she felt a little overwhelmed when Tricia asked her to serve as a mentor. She thought, *This younger woman has other mentors and is self-assured. What do I have to offer her?* Tricia's assertiveness almost caused her to pull away.

Try slowing down the process. At the first meeting ask your potential mentor to pray about her decision, and then set a second meeting to discuss the idea further, allowing her time to think.

Because the word *mentor* conjures cold and intimidating images, you may find a potential mentor more responsive by first "tenderizing" your words when approaching her.

**How might *you* gently approach a potential mentor, using "tenderized" words? Circle any of the following examples that would fit your style.**

1. "I need a friend who is farther along to lean on. I'm wondering if you would be willing . . ."
  2. "Do you think we could get together on a regular basis to talk about . . .?"
  3. "I'd like to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_. Do you think you could help me?"
  4. "You're very good at \_\_\_\_\_. How would you feel about my helping you on that project?"
  5. Write your own "tenderized" gentle approach idea.
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## Persistence

Perhaps you've invited someone to mentor you, using the gentle approach just described, and you think she understands what you are asking, but still says "no." Our encouraging you to persist doesn't imply that it's OK to pressure her to commit to a mentoring relationship. Instead, *persist* in keeping your dream alive by continuing to pray for God to open your eyes to other possibilities.

In the Scriptures Jesus described an incident in which a friend, needing to feed an unexpected guest, went to his neighbor's house late one night to ask for bread. The neighbor at first refused, saying his family was in bed.

**Read below what Jesus said happened next.**

*"He may not get up and give you the bread, just because you are his friend. But he will get up and give you as much as you need, simply because you are not ashamed to keep on asking" (Luke 11:8).*

**Respond to the questions below, circling your answer.**

**1. Suppose you are the man asking for bread from your neighbor.**

**Why, according to this verse, will your neighbor give you what you need?**

- a. because we are good friends.
- b. because he is a good neighbor.
- c. because I'm not ashamed to keep on asking.

**2. What does this verse teach about God's response to our prayers?**

- a. I must persuade God to answer my prayers.
- b. God wants me to beg Him over and over to show I'm serious.
- c. God will build my faith in Him as I persist in prayer.

If you answered c. for both questions, good for you! The passage above reminds us that if humans can be persuaded, how much more responsive will our Father be to us when we express our needs! The Lord hears your prayer for a mentor friend.

Sometimes we don't understand why God waits to bring the answers to our prayers. Tricia says, "I prayed 15 years before Edna came into my life to mentor me. Did God hear my prayer during that long wait? Yes, He did. I now realize He was preparing me to receive what He had to give. And He showed perfect timing, impeccable taste, and an amazing sense of balance when He gave me Edna as a mentor. So, wait wisely!"

- **How long have you prayed for a mentor?** \_\_\_\_\_
- **What is God teaching you as you wait?**

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## “Real”ness

When you enter a mentoring relationship, you may worry, *Will she still like me once she knows the "real" me?* You are not alone. Many mereas feel pressure to perform in an acceptable way to their mentors, whom they admire. Unfortunately, the harder you try to perform for *others*, the more you lose sight of *your* real self: your unique hopes, values, and dreams.

Many of the women we surveyed expressed a desire for a mentor who would love them *just as they were*. For example, Connie Durham, of Greenwood, Indiana, described a mentor as "one who knows all my faults but loves me anyway." Connie's response reflects the universal longing to be valued for who we are, not for who we *ought* to be, according to someone else's definition.

Believe it or not, there's lots to love about you. Everyone needs a friend to recognize her endearing attributes. Tricia says her daughter, Emily, helped her learn how to look deeper to see something special in someone.

"Emily has a special stuffed animal her daddy and her sister, Sara, brought home from their trip to Australia. He's not hi-techô he's a wombat, a "burrowing marsupial," says Webster. At first, I couldn't see anything endearing about the rodent-like toy. But 'Wombattie,' as Emily calls him, has found a place in her heart. She kisses him goodbye when she leaves; she snuggles with him at night. Like the stuffed toy in the children's story, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, most of his hair has been loved off. When other toys have lost her interest, nearly-hairless Wombat remains a faithful friend, sitting in the honored place on her bed. With time I've noticed a change in my own appreciation of stuffed marsupials: *I'm* starting to notice Wombat has some endearing qualities. . . ."

Let your mentor get to know the real you. Sharing your true selfô your needs, values, and opinionsô allows her to respond to you honestly. Your being real also helps her avoid the pitfall of needing to perform in order to be accepted by *you!*

- **Is there anything about you that you think will make you unacceptable to your mentor?**

Yes  No

If yes, describe. \_\_\_\_\_

## Humility

Humility has gotten a bad rap over the years. No one wants to appear weak. Humility is not walking around with your head down, assuming everyone else is better than you. It's more about acknowledging your needs, graciously receiving, and not thinking more highly of yourself than you ought.

Edna experienced the heartache of missing a blessing because of pride. She says, "When my daughter, Patsy, was nine, my pastor's wife urged me to send her to the Christian girls' camp that summer. I confided that my family could not afford camp that year. The next day the camp director called with good news that Patsy had been awarded a scholarship to camp. Horrified that my church would think we were poor or that I was a negligent money manager, I lied and said Patsy couldn't go since she would be visiting her grandmother that week. I still regret that Patsy missed out on a blessing because of my prideful cover-up."

**How hard is it for you to humbly accept help from others? Circle one.**

- a. almost impossible
- b. very hard
- c. somewhat hard
- d. easy

Also, God's chosen mentor for you may not be someone with prestige or power. She may be unassuming. You may find her while helping with phone calls for a fellowship, or while serving in other behind-the-scenes tasks. Your willingness to serve, whether the task is large or small, allows you to connect with potential mentors.

### **Respectfulness**

In our country we view the older years as a period of life riddled with failing wit, memory, and physical prowess. An older woman may need you to affirm the value of wisdom she's gained from years of living. Thank her for sharing knowledge. Ask what she's learned from life. Respect her.

Tricia says, "Having lived in the southern US much of my life, I learned early to respond to my elders with "Ma'am" and "Sir." I still sometimes answer Edna, my mom or dad, or other mature adults with a deferential "Ma'am" or "Sir." It's a good reminder to me that no matter my age, my elders deserve my respect."

- **How do you show respect for adults who are farther along in life than you?**

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So now, how about it? How will you develop qualities that draw a mentor and make you ready to receive what God will give you through her?

Confession, some say, is good for the soul. To confess means to "agree with." Pray as you read the following statements aloud. Which can you agree with God about? Mark those, asking the Lord to change you.

#### **I confess:**

- 1. I have trouble humbling myself to learn from others. I lay aside self-sufficiency and open myself to learning from my mentor.**
- 2. Sometimes I push to get my way. I commit to approaching a mentor with the same gentleness with which you, Lord, approach me.**
- 3. Sometimes I feel discouraged with waiting. I'll trust you, Lord, believing you are working on my behalf.**
- 4. As an adult, I've never thought about my need to respect my spiritual elders. I commit to showing my mentor that I value the wisdom she has gained from experience.**
- 5. I tend to hide what I really think so I'll be accepted by others. I will try to be more real.**

ARNF: *A mentor sees your endearing qualities, even if you're a wombat.*

