

Unit One: Preparing Your Heart

Session One

Do I Have the Stuff Mentors Are Made Of?

by Tricia Scribner

The word *mentor* may conjure up a variety of images for you. A wide range of definitions of mentoring saturate the secular and the Christian world.

Check (✓) the definition which most closely describes how you define mentoring:

- "Mentoring. . . means using the best part of yourself to help another see and become the best that they can be."*

--Esther Burroughs, author, Coral Gables, Florida

- Mentoring occurs when a "woman who is older and wiser, with experience, takes a younger woman under her wing to share, teach, and train her."*

--Lynette McElroy, Sidney, Nebraska

- "One with wisdom, knowledge and experience greater than the one with whom the wisdom is shared, who guides, accepts, and holds accountable another."*

--Lynna Rea Winkler, Springhill, Louisiana

- A mentor is "...a trusted counselor, guide, tutor, or coach."*

--Donna Otto, author, Scottsdale, Arizona

- "Someone who shares God-given wisdom with someone else on a regular basis with the aim of encouraging that person in bite-sized bits to live a life that is pleasing to God."*

--Paula Scantlebury, Farfields-Sunnyside, England

In your own words, write your definition of a mentor:

I have a bone to pick with the writer of this verse. First, I don't like being called an "older woman." Despite my wrinkles and flapping underarms, I'm a mere babe compared to my friend, Miss Ludie, now 96 years old. Second, the phrase "reverent in their behavior"(NASB) sounds like I'll never again be able to tuck my nightshirt in my shorts and go out into the yard to prune roses. Third, I have never gossiped maliciously, only with the best intent. Fourth, I'm definitely not enslaved to wine. (However, I have been known to down a full jar of marshmallow cream in less than two minutes when overcome by a sugar craving.) Last, I'd be glad to teach what is good. Just give me the outline of what that includes and a mild sedative thirty minutes before I speak. And could you give me a podium that's high enough for me to rest my chin if I feel faint?

Many times I don't feel qualified to mentor. The problem is that by the time I do feel qualified I'll be in heaven with the Lord. While that's great for me, it doesn't do much for Mary Smith down here on earth looking for someone to help her grow.

❖ Qualified and Called

When 189 Christian women in Virginia were surveyed regarding what they wanted in leaders, the top four prized characteristics were: commitment; love and trust of God, Christ, and others; dedication to God and the church; and compassion and caring.

As you reflect on these characteristics, consider what qualifies you to serve as a mentor. Read the following and check (✓) the ones which apply to you:

- I have committed my life to Jesus Christ.
- I love the Saviour and seek to obey Him.
- Christ has walked with me through difficult life experiences.
- At times I have hurt, failed, fallen, and floundered.
- I have endured disappointment.
- I feel compassion for the plight of another.
- I am growing in my understanding of God's trustworthiness.
- I sense that God wants me to serve as a mentor.

How many did you check? You are more qualified than you think.

Qualification does not come with educational degrees, age (necessarily), or other accomplishments. Instead, you are qualified in your heart. Christ qualifies you because you are witness to His presence and love within your life experiences.

Serving as a mentor doesn't imply that you are fully mature either. In fact, you may have a mentor for yourself while you mentor someone else. Serving as an effective mentor does mean that you are open to Christ, learning and growing, and actively pursuing your own wholeness (maturity). The greatest gift you can give your mentee is yourself, given out of your fullness in Christ, not out of obligation or needing to prove something.

So, while you pursue the godly characteristics of Titus 2:3, be patient with yourself. Even Paul did not view himself as having reached the pinnacle of righteousness, but continually reached forward in obedience (Philippians 3:12).

❖ From Resistance to Resolve

A few years ago we had a large Irish Setter dog we called Elijah. (I wonder if the prophet would be honored or offended?) Since he was a house dog, we bathed him in our big bathtub--at least we tried. As soon as he heard water running and spied me walking toward him, his eyes bulged, his ears drooped, and he tried to hide his 65-pound frame under any object more than six inches off the floor. Once caught, we'd have to carry him because pulling him was like trying to move a bulldozer. Getting him through the bathroom door was no picnic either. He writhed, flailed and clawed; you'd think he was going to the gas chamber.

If you are experiencing that kind of resistance about mentoring, then slow down, take a breath, and give yourself permission to take the time you need to make a wise decision. But know that some feelings of apprehension are completely normal--even once you are involved in the mentoring process.

Moses, too, experienced apprehension when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to freedom. But God was not dependent upon Moses' ability to accomplish the task. He wanted Moses to depend on Him instead of his own ability.

Read Exodus 3:7-10 and 4:10-12. Now read below an adapted translation (based on the New Century Version) of what God said to his servant, Moses, and is saying to you as well. In the blanks, write Moses' fearful response in your own words:

v. 7: I have seen your mentee's troubles. I have heard her cry. I am concerned about her pain, and I have come to help her through you. I will bring her out of that land and lead her into a good land, a fertile land. So now I am sending you.

v. 11: But Lord, _____.

v. 12: I will be with you. This will be proof that I am sending you. After you lead her out, you both will worship me in this place.

Exodus 4:10: But Lord, _____.

v. 11: Who made your mouth? It is I, the LORD. Now go. I will help you speak, and I will teach you what to say.

Pray: "Even so, Lord, send me."

As you enter the mentoring relationship, know that God is walking with you. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:24 (NASB): "*Faithful* is He who *calls* you, and He also will *bring* it to *pass*." Affirm your trust in God as you fill in the blanks below:

_____ is He who _____ you, and He also will
_____ it to _____.

☞ Always Remember and Never Forget (ARNF): Don't wait until you are perfect to mentor. By then all your teeth will have fallen out and no one will be able to understand you.