

## Reflections on Mentoring in the Bible

Your group is responsible for leading a time of devotions for 30 minutes from 8:15 to 8:45 in the morning. It is up to you as a group to decide how you would like to organise this time. The following notes and questions have been prepared to help you start thinking about the Biblical example of mentoring chosen for the day. This is just a guide, feel free to shape this time as the Holy Spirit leads you.

### Questions to ponder throughout the week:

- *What is a good mentor like?*
- *What is a good mentee like?*
- *What characterises a good mentoring relationship?*
- *What questions does this biblical example raise in us?*

## Monday: Jesus and the disciples

**Passages:** Luke 6:12-16; Mark 4:34; John 15:15; Mark 14:32-34; Luke 9:1-2,6; Luke 10:1-21

### Quotes about mentoring:

*'Jesus gives us our best example of what it means to be a mentor, and how to go about it. He makes himself available to people, deals with them as unique individuals and engages them in creative dialogue. He listens carefully and asks penetrating questions, affirming and encouraging them on their spiritual journey. Skilfully he applies the word of God to their lives, helps them to identify and remove obstacles to growth and patiently bears with them in their mistakes and failures. Throughout he remains committed to them in love.'* (Horsfall, 2014)

*'There is a need for a subtle but critical paradigm shift moving from an enlisting way of ministering in our communities to more of an investing way of ministering. So much of our leadership culture is dominated by the need to enlist volunteers for the various activities of the church. This sort of work begins with "a slot to fill" and then the hard recruiting work of finding people to fill those many slots, whether they are ushers or Sunday school teachers or building committees members. The work of enlisting others will always be part of our leadership culture, but what if our primary attention was given to people investment? Investing suggests we need to begin with paying attention to and honouring the good work God is already doing in people's lives. And then we ask: What does this person need in order to grow more fully into a kingdom way of life? It suggests an equal if not greater concern for the kingdom work they are designed for than the work we ourselves may have been given to do. In fact, deepening and empowering others may well be the more mature work we have been invited to consider (Eph 4:12)'. (Reese & Loane, 2012)*

### Reflection questions:

- List some ways in which Jesus mentored his disciples?
- What stands out to you in the ways Jesus mentored his disciples? Why does this strike you?

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## Tuesday: Jethro and Moses

**Passage:** Exodus 18

### Quotes about mentoring:

*'So much of what passes for leadership development today lacks interpersonal investment, life upon life. Simply telling others where they must go won't cut it. The journey must be shared. Guiding requires a mentor's heart.'* (Reese & Loane, 2012)

*'Spiritual mentors invite us to recognise that God is always present in the world, and they work with us to help us discern his footprints. They agree with the ancient poet, quoted by the apostle Paul, who said, 'For in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). We live in a God-filled world and our job is to awaken to his presence, notice what he is doing, and go with the flow of divine activity. Consequently, the work of the mentor, as Anderson and Reese point out, is 'not to create but to notice, not to invent but to discern'.'* (Horsfall, 2014)

### Reflection questions:

- Is there anything that strikes you or surprises you in this passage?
- Why do you think Moses needed someone to help him think about delegating responsibility?
- What characterises the exchanges of Jethro and Moses? What does it tell us about mentoring?
- What does this example tell us about the need of established leaders for ongoing mentoring? What can stand in the way of this kind of relationship?

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## Wednesday: Moses and Joshua

**Passages:** Exodus 17:8-16; Exodus 24:12-16; Exodus 33:7-23; Numbers 27:15-23; Joshua 1:1-9

### Quotes about mentoring:

[In today's mission context we need to] *'recover a leadership of companionship and a spirituality of relationship.'* (Reese & Loane, 2012)

*'We are also convinced that leadership development in Jesus' name is a slow and deep work. Amid the hectic pace of normal life and ministry today, the thought of slowing down in order to pay attention to the formation of others is a hard sell. We want the brightest and the best to be able to hit the ground running. And even if we do invest in them developmentally, it is mainly so we can get more mileage out of them. Sadly, many well-intended servants of the Lord are so driven to get things done for God that they neglect both themselves and the people they serve. It is no wonder that many followers of Jesus today feel as though they have been reduced to "functionaries for God," as James Houston puts it. Such discoveries can be so very confusing, even despairing. But there are many others who are in search for better and more faithful ways to invest deeply in others. Their lives seem to challenge the more conventional understandings of Christian leadership. Much more than simply getting done what needs to get done as efficiently as possible, they care deeply about who people are becoming along the way.'* (Reese & Loane, 2012)

### Reflection questions:

- Is there anything that strikes you or surprises you in this passage?
- How did Moses help Joshua learn about God and relate to Him?
- Moses gave Joshua a number of strategic assignments. What do these tell us about how mentors can provide learning opportunities? What do you imagine happened before and after these assignments?
- How can we avoid a spirit of competition in a mentoring relationship?

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## Thursday: Eli and Samuel

**Passage:** 1 Samuel 3

### Quotes about mentoring:

[Thomas Merton (1960) defined spiritual mentoring as having the purpose of going beyond] *'the surface of a man's life, to get behind the façade of conventional gestures and attitudes which he presents to the world, and to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth, which is what we call the likeness of Christ in his soul.'*

*'Are we noticing others within our contexts, and how are we approaching their learning and formation? Are we making related decisions based primarily on expediency and efficiency for the sake of the mission? What might happen if we approached people in our contexts with a genuine concern to invest in them as persons, in the learning they may uniquely need in order to be true to the beating within? Noticing God's good work in others will challenge our way of doing things for God.'* (Reese & Loane, 2012)

### Reflection questions:

- Is there anything that strikes you or surprises you in this passage?
- Does mentoring require perfection? How can someone with shortcomings be an effective mentor?
- What does this text say about the risks and rewards of honesty in a mentoring relationship?
- What can this passage teach us about mentoring relationships?

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## Friday: Barnabas and Paul

**Passage:** Acts 9:1-31; Acts 11:19-30;

### Quotes about mentoring:

*'Postmodern culture is relationally oriented and resists the 'one size fits all' mentality of the previous generation. Pre-programmed discipleship packages are less likely to be effective as we move further into the 21st century. Mentoring offers the freedom to recognise that each individual is unique and that their story and journey are unique as well. Wisely practised, and because of its care for the nurture of the individual, it will liberate many into a deeper experience of God and a more radical discipleship. It is ideally suited to a context where many fresh expressions of church are blossoming. At its heart, spiritual mentoring is simply a relationship between two people for the purpose of spiritual growth.'* (Horsfall, 2014)

*'One of the most significant keys to infusing a system with healthy power dynamics is for the top leaders to mentor not only the promising pups from the same litter but also the ducklings that don't seem to fit but have leadership promise. Inclusion is a powerful experience. When you are a minority or different or new, being included is huge. It makes a major statement to the entire system when persons in power mentor potential leaders outside their immediate professional and social networks.'* (Morse, 2008)

### Reflection questions:

- Is there anything that strikes you or surprises you in this passage?
- Why do you think Barnabas took Paul in even when the others were afraid of him?
- How can mentors stand up for their mentees?
- Barnabas' name is almost always listed in Scripture along with the names of other people. He was a real team player. How can mentors teach and model teamwork and inclusive leadership?

## Bibliography

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Morse, M. K. (2008) *Making Room For Leadership: Power, Space and Influence*. Downers Grove: IVP

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Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church: *Biblical Reflection on Mentoring*. Available at <https://www.holston.org/media/ministry/resource/BiblicalReflectiononMentoring.pdf>