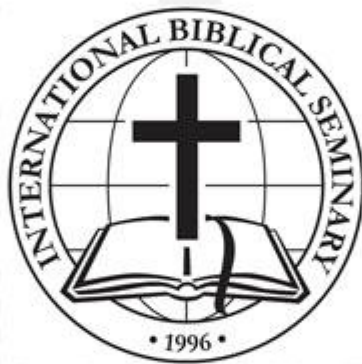


# **Mentor**

**One on One**



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**International Biblical Seminary--Bivocational Ministry.**

**Chapter 7:**

## **Mentoring in action**

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## Chapter Seven: Mentoring in action (ministry)

Brother Alan came from Singapore to HOD in his golden years. Recently widowed, he promised his beloved wife that he would serve God till the end. His position in HOD was a bit awkward: was he a disciple, or was he a teacher? All his life he was bi-vocational in ministry but now suddenly in a circle of “full-time” ministers and trainees. Newman had a dilemma when he invited Alan. I guess the mutual commitment to serving together was real but the terms of ministry conditions were not stipulated. Obviously, Alan had a free spirit and it was the way Alan always was and would be to serve God, but Newman thought otherwise. (I think he wanted to retrain him.) Anyway, to make everybody happy and feeling belongingness Newman wanted Alan to sit in his classes but assigned Alan the responsibility to take the young ministers to personal evangelism and visitations.

I was self-taught in evangelism with the help of a book published by the Navigators, who built their ministry heavily on one-on-one principles. I read the whole 8 chapters of *The Art of Personal Witnessing* and started to evangelize on campus, undauntedly for my last 9 months at Cornell and saw good results. I loved to do personal evangelism. So, every Tuesday, several men and women from HOD went to UCLA or USC to meet people. In this sense Alan was a good mentor: that he let us do our works: selection of targets, the approach, initial conversation, exploring common interests, leading into gospel message, invitation of salvation, and decision of personal commitment and prayer, etc. The benefits of evangelism in pairs are not just someone to support you in praying silently, or to bail you out if you are really stuck. The greatest benefits are in the discussions afterwards, which I never had as I worked alone at Cornell. Did you do everything right? How did you understand the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Could you have done it in different ways? What and why did you say in a haste and perhaps offended somebody? You did not realize that you had room for improvement until your partner pointed out; he was there and watched you make blunders. That’s how we learned; and we learned from each other.

If I was somewhat experienced in personal evangelism, I was green in hospital visitations. I had never made rounds in hospitals. Alan was there; so was Newman. (Sometimes he took me too.) I am so glad that they had been there before. To tell you the truth, the first few times when I visited in the hospital I was overwhelmed, for one, the smell really bothered me; and I thought they were all going to die. Then I learned a simplest rule: you can be bold in prayers but you must be tender in talking to the bed-ridden. Be cheerful, yet soft. People who are weak want to be comforted, not challenged. Soft voices can also inspire faith. Then, I also understood that what you may say had a lot to do with the spiritual maturity of the patient. You do not just grab a *Counselor’s Handbook*, turn to ‘Hospital Visits’ and read off it. Visitation is a personal thing, very personal; you have to be personal and you have to know the one you visit in a personal level.

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Gradually, the visitations extend into homes, where we met a whole different scope of situations that may be spiritually unhealthy. Before then, I never knew life problems beyond a student's sheltered world. Soon after, I was taking a brother with me. Now, I was the mentor, the more experienced, though not well prepared still. Deo was about my age; in fact, we were in the same university in the same years. He was an architect, a good brother, really had a heart for the Lord, willing to spend much of his spare time in serving the church. The personalities, however, got in our way of laboring together. We would not always see things eye to eye. Sometimes, the consultation after visitation took longer time than the visitation itself. I remember one time on our way back, we started to review what we did, then we sat in the car in front of my house and continued to discuss (for not to disturb my family); and we discussed for about two hours, both exhausted and frustrated. But it was not a total loss for we resolved we would never again engage in such a non-productive conversation. Now, what was the cliché? "We agree to disagree." Right! I learned through mistakes and failures, even though I was supposed to be the mentor. Though we are not serving together now, I truly consider Deo a dear brother and friend in the Lord.

A happier mentoring experience was years later in the church where I just started. There was a retired general who became a Christian in his 60's. I believe he was 67, and I was 32, when he asked me very seriously if he could go out with me to visitations. Honestly, I was looking for someone younger, but that young man never showed up. So I took him. Trained as a career soldier, he observed but never questioned what I did. He was very faithful, though I never expected him to carry on a visitation ministry after I "trained" him. He came to every prayer meeting, genuinely cared for brothers and sisters. In the church splits that we suffered, this old brother stood by my side, as always; we did not exchange our thoughts much but I knew his heart was torn. Always thinking he was too old to take on any real responsibility I never set, or even considered him in an elder's role; but what do you know? He lived to be 103. Had I asked him to be an elder when he was 80, he still would have 20 years to serve. Who knows? He might have lived even longer.

Speaking of prayer meetings, there are personal prayers and there are prayer meetings; both can be mentored. In personal prayers we learn by imitation; by this I mean we can learn by praying with a more matured person. Many a young Christians admire the more seasoned of their eloquence in prayer *languages*. I would not comment too much on this except to say that even the best imitation can be hollow if the prayers do not come from our hearts. The prayer meetings, especially for caring ministry, must precede or follow a sharing from the ministry leaders. Sharing can be a great act of mentoring for the mentee learns not only what, but also why and how of ministry. We pray for a certain brother because he has a need. This is obvious. But when we pray, do we (at least the two persons who might visit him) feel the unction of the Holy Spirit? What does the Lord review to us? Is there a message to bring with us to him? Do we have faith that our visit will bring result? Why? And what is that result? All these may be the work of the Holy Spirit in us before it will happen to that

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brother in need. Shared information will encourage us to minister in one accord and be effective. This is why we ought to share before or after the prayer meetings and visitations.

I don't know if this would be the proof text for mentoring, but we can certainly take a look at John 5:19 when Jesus told the Jews how he operated. Simply said, He saw and did what the Father did; and I suppose this is mentoring. I dare to add, that not only Jesus saw and did what the Father did but also how and why He did them. Then, this mentoring principle was repeated and passed down from Jesus to the disciples. With a bold statement Jesus encouraged The Twelve, "Greater works than these shall he (you) do." How? By being mentored, and then knowing, learning how and why Jesus did these things. In Acts 4:13, the IDs of the disciples are 'that they had been with Jesus'.

Jesus often called His disciples aside after a certain portion of teaching, especially after a 'major event', as we would call it today. The disciples saw the actions, now was a teachable moment for mentoring time. The gospels were so vividly written that we, the readers, today also will capture the moments. The obvious ones we can easily find, such as Mt 13, when Jesus explained not to all but the smaller gathering of disciples; they asked questions and Jesus answered. The more delicate, the minute ones may escape us if we do not pay attention and use a little more imagination in our daily meditations. For instance, in Mt 6: 26-28, Matthew carefully used two different verbs in Jesus' teaching; 'behold' the fowls in the air, but 'consider' the lilies of the field. Many believed that this must be the outdoor classroom for the examples He used were what people could perceive. How nice it was that while Jesus taught the great lesson of faith a few flocks of birds flew by, and he pointed to the spring field full of wild lilies. Everybody saw these and instantly caught the ready 'life situation' of faith. But one day, I was wondering, how often do you see a lily? We may see birds fly by, even in cities (the bird drops on car tops seem to prove their frequency); but lilies? First of all, it has to be spring, and in a temperate climate. However, we all have seen the large, prominent flowers at times. (I hope our Eskimo brothers have seen them, too, at least a photograph.) Look at the verbs Jesus used, 'consider'. We don't need to see with eyes but to use our mind, to consider, to contemplate, to meditate the wonders that God gives us lilies and cares for them. A good teacher does not miss many teachable moments.

Occasions of personal mentoring are plenty with Peter's blunt actions. Jesus chastised him his lack of faith. When? At the time when he almost drowned, not earlier when he seemed to have demonstrated his faith and asked Jesus to bid him walk on the water. (He was braver than others.) (Mt 14:23-33) If Jesus had said it earlier, I doubt we would find Peter in such a ready acceptance mode of Jesus' teaching. I often wonder what Peter was doing when they hail Jesus as Son of God. Was he sitting quietly in a corner somewhat embarrassed, or was he in a crowd but avoiding attention?

How about 'Peter, the fisher of one coin'? (Mt 17:24-27) Solving problem that Peter got into was never the problem with Jesus but to make Peter learn his lesson may take repeated opportunities. Reading

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the gospel narratives, no one can deny Peter's apparent flaw that he talked too much and reacted too fast. He opened his mouth even when he was afraid and did not know what else to do. (Mt 17:4-7; Mk 9:5-6; Luke 9:33) Many a times we find Jesus tried to correct him, in such a tender or indirect way. But we should not look down upon Peter; look at ourselves: we are the same — old habits just don't die!

On the greatness of kingdom, we read in Mt 18:1-3, Jesus even purposely called a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples, saying, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." This lesson, however, was not well received, for it was evidenced in Mt 19: 13-15, (if we trust the natural order of events as reported in this gospel,) that when people took little children for Jesus to lay hands upon them, the disciple rebuked the grownups. Did the disciples learn? I suspect, instead of the disciples, among the crowd some heard what Jesus taught and took to their hearts — that's why they brought the children with them to see Jesus at the first place. Jesus had to repeat his teaching, "Let the children come . . . for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." I think this time The Twelve learned and never would forget.

These were the mentoring moments; Peter and his brothers were caught in actions and received corrections. By and by they changed because of Jesus attentive mentoring.

In this chapter, we see a few things of a mentor and why it is necessary to mentor in live actions:

- A spiritual mentor may not be a pastor or a full-time minister; we need more bi-vocational mentors
- There are different personalities to mentors as to different mentees
- A mentor is doing his job by not doing the mentees' job; mentees need opportunities to learn
- Two by two formula Jesus employed also provides mutual mentorship of the disciples
- Reflections and discussions after personal evangelism or other ministry actions are effective mentorship techniques
- Caring for the infirmity is another good mentoring opportunity
- Pastoral skills, such as visitation can be learned, and should not be limited to professional pastors only
- Family visits often uncover the real life problems that warrant pastoral care
- Personalities and viewpoints differ or even clash; but we should learn to work together: we agree

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to disagree

- Frequent contacts of a mentee with his (her) mentor create more often the teachable moments
- Prayer meetings can be a great mentoring tool; a mentor's sharing and explanations is his teaching
- Prayer is more than speaking to God, in a prayer meeting we must listen to all participants and find out how the Holy Spirit moves in us and bring us to one accord
- Mentorship is more than imitation the forms, but understanding of why and how of spiritual things
- Mentoring personal Bible Study and meditation can result in a mentee's opening of spiritual eyes and understanding
- Mentors attentively look for opportunities to teach and correct

#### **Suggestions for Discussions and Investigations:**

1. What is your idea of bi-vocational ministry? Can a career person be effective in mentoring others spiritually?
2. Have you heard of the Navigators? What is the value of one-on-one ministries if mass media evangelism seems more effective?
3. Did you catch the process of personal evangelism in this chapter? With this knowledge, are you encouraged to launch your first practice – even without a mentor? Better yet, would you find a mentoring partner and start to do personal evangelism?
4. Have you visited patients in a hospital before? If you did, share the experience, please. If you did not, tell us what worries you, or prevents you from doing so? How do you cheer up the sick?
5. In your church do congregation expect, or welcome pastoral visits? Why is it, that sometimes an unofficial visit is more genuine and fruitful than formal visits? Extend or expand the discussion.
6. Why is prayer meeting (and personal prayer, too) not a one-way communication? How do you develop the ability to listen to the voice of Holy Spirit?
7. Not counting biblical examples here mentioned, what are the mentoring occasions (categories)

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illustrated in this chapter? How many are there? Can you think of more possibilities?

8. How many biblical examples of Jesus mentorship in actions are used in this chapter?
9. Can a 'teachable moment' be created, developed, or expected? How and how to capture such a moment?
10. Why do we often learn only through failures?
11. Which occasion is more embarrassing for Peter: sinking and almost drowning or fishing for one coin?
12. Do you love children? Really? Why do you think Jesus told the disciple to change and become like children, so that they may be fit for kingdom of heaven? If there are no satisfactory conclusions, go home and meditate more. Come back to share if you have new insights.
13. Please list a few things you learn from this chapter in personal bible study and meditation. What have you not paid attention before?

**Action Item(s):**

Write down at least one action item for yourself, relating to this chapter. And do it immediately.

Suggestions:

1. Refer to question #3, find a mentoring partner and start personal evangelism.
2. Similar actions, such as visitation, prayer meeting or study/meditation of the Bible.
3. List your own repeatedly stubborn, old habits that won't die. Now, make them dead.

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