

Spiritual mentoring

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Christian-ministry leaders perform different roles both in the church and in the society. One of these roles is offering mentorship to members of their congregations or to society members outside the congregation. The kind of mentorship offered by a spiritual leader is known as “ spiritual mentorship.” Spiritual mentorship can be defined as a personal development relationship whereby, an experienced and a knowledgeable spiritual leader helps an individual who is undergoing a difficult situation to overcome it through providing spiritual, social, and emotional support and encouragement.

When an individual is undergoing difficult times, it is important to seek mentorship from a spiritual leader. One of the reasons why spiritual mentorship is important is because it helps an individual to overcome very difficult situations, which tend to hinder a person from moving forward in life after they have occurred. Inability to move forward in life can be observed if an individual expresses fear, pain, hatred, and/or misunderstanding towards a given past occurrence. Fear, hatred, and pain, are some of the negative behaviors, which act as obstacles in the process of overcoming negative past experiences. Spiritual mentoring can help a person root out these negative behaviors. A spiritual leader uses a spiritual approach to help an individual to learn how to live from the heart and understand that everything that happens in this life, happens for a reason.

According to Anderson and Reese, spiritual mentoring is important because it enables spiritual breakthroughs. In life, there are some experiences, which make one reach a plateau in spiritual living. When one reaches this point, one feels trapped and unable to advance in life, no matter how the individual tries. The feelings are frustrating and if an individual does not seek spiritual

help, the feelings may persist to a point where they may distort the mental health of that person. Through spiritual mentorship, one is able to identify the issues, which contribute to such feelings, and learn how to stop these issues from interfering with one's spirituality.

II. THE MENTORING APPROACHES There are different approaches of conducting spiritual mentoring. The approach chosen depends on the mentee's needs and his/her expected outcomes from the mentorship process. While comparing two mentor interviews with Pastor Walter E. Cook and Elder Burness Bullock, a number of similarities and differences were noted concerning the approach employed by the two mentors in mentoring two different individuals, in two different occurrences.

One of the similarities of these two interviews is a statement by the mentors that mentees are the initiators of the mentoring relationships. In the first interview, the mentee is the one who came forth and requested Pastor Cook to help him get over the situation he was experiencing. In the second interview, Elder Bullock also points out that the mentee approached him and expressed that she needed somebody to help her make it through the hard situation she was going through. However, Pastor Cook points out that there are situations when the mentor can himself initiate the mentorship relationship. Pastor Cook observed that the mentee was undergoing difficult times and thought it would be wise if he volunteered to help him get over the difficulty through spiritual support and encouragement.

Even though the mentee in Pastor Cook's case was reluctant in accepting the mentor's help, Pastor Cook's case clearly demonstrates that a mentorship

relationship can be initiated either by the mentor or by the mentee. Another similarity is that in both cases, the mentors were quite familiar with the mentees. Pastor Cook knew the mentee since his childhood while elder Bullock knew the mentee for many years. However, both mentors point out that knowing their mentees was the most difficult aspect of their mentorship relationship. Pastor Cook had observed the mentee as he grew up from childhood to adulthood.

On the other hand, since elder Cook knew the mentee for many years, he knew many aspects of her life. Moreover, in both cases, the mentors assured the mentees that they were going to maintain confidentiality. On the other hand, Pastor Cook and Elder Bullock have quite a number of differences regarding their mentoring approach. The first observable difference between the two mentors is in the location of mentorship sessions. While Pastor Cook used to conduct mentorship session from a church, Elder Bullock conducted his mentorship sessions from a restaurant.

Pastor Cook explains that his meetings between with the mentee were informal. Most of the meetings they held were unscheduled and spontaneous. Pastor Cook mentions that has met at least once in a month without necessarily scheduling the meeting. He continues that mentorship sessions were conducted during the Church's office hours between 10 a. m. and 3 p.

m. from Tuesday till Friday. Nevertheless, it is clear that the mentee had an upper hand in determining the timing of the mentorship sessions. Every mentorship session lasted between a couple of minutes to ninety minutes.

Conversely, Elder Bullock met with the mentee at a restaurant every Thursday for one hour.

At the restaurant they would find a private place where they conducted their sessions. In both cases, there is a difference in how the time allocated to mentorship sessions was spent. In the first case, there was no predetermined format of spending time. The mentor and the mentee would have conversations, which covered different topics. There were no starting points or closure points simply because every session was a continuation of the previous meeting.

On the contrary, in the second case the mentorship sessions had a predetermined format which was followed during all sessions. Every mentorship session started with a word of prayer. Thereafter, the mentor would ask the mentee to talk about her thoughts, feelings, fears and worries. The mentor would then take notes of what the mentee said to ensure that he did not miss even the slightest detail of what was going on. In both cases, the results of the mentorship relationships were different.

In the first case, Pastor Cook explains that it was difficult to determine the results of the mentorship relationship immediately. Pastor Cook states that the relationship between him and the mentee was likely to contribute positively towards the mentee's life. He believed that the mentee was still growing and blossoming through making use of the things he learnt during the mentorship sessions. For this reason, Pastor Cook says that the final product of mentorship relationship was yet to come forth. However, he had no doubts that the mentee would prove to be a special achiever. On the

other hand, in the second case, Elder Bullock was able to determine the results of the relationship.

He stated that after the mentorship the mentee began to talk about the event that had traumatized her without much pain and emotion. All the negative feelings that the mentee had, had ended and she was able to develop a positive attitude towards life. Eventually, she was able to move on with her life. III. CONCLUSION From a personal perspective, one of the lessons learnt from the interviews cases analyzed above is that in spiritual mentoring it is important for the mentor to have a background information about the mentee.

This enables the mentor to be in a position to provide a better mentorship when approached by the mentee. The mentor would not have difficult time trying to comprehend the circumstances surrounding the experience the mentee is going through at a certain time. It may be difficult for a spiritual leader to know everything about the life of his congregation members or that of non-members. However, he/she should at least try to be attentive to the happenings in the surrounding environment. This way he/she would be in a position to notice when a congregation member or a member of the society is in need of spiritual mentoring.

Another lesson is that while conducting mentorship, the mentor should adapt flexibility towards the mentee. For instance, the mentor can allow the mentee to make decisions regarding timing of mentorship session and location. The mentor can also allow the mentee to express his/herself during the mentorship session. Besides the mentor should not assume the role of

the teacher. This may make the mentee feel uneasy and hence unable to communicate effectively with the mentor. Therefore, the mentor should ensure that the mentoring process is as flexible as possible to avoid putting pressure on the mentee, a thing that can hinder achievement of the purpose of mentorship.

Finally, from the analysis of the two interviews, one can learn that the results of mentorship can either be achieved immediately after the mentorship process or afterwards. In my opinion, achievement of mentorship results depends on the personality of the individual. The mentor should recognize that the learning process takes place differently in different people. There are people who learn quickly and easily adjust to various life situations using what they have learnt while others take their time in the process. Nevertheless, mentorship normally results positively regardless of mentee's pace of learning.