

Will you take a risk with us, and allow us to serve alongside you in the fight for values we all face? Will you let us share with you our burning passions, while receiving the treasure of your experience? Bridging the gap is not as hard as you might think...all we're really asking for is some coaching to help us get past our childhood and enter the adult world. Our generation will lead this culture into the next century. We need you to help us find our place in a confusing world. Please don't leave us standing at the starting gate.

Signed,

Looking for Mentors

x



I have to admit, I was a little proud. My good friend Rob had just won the award for being "Teacher of the Year" at the high school where he taught. I had the privilege of attending the banquet that would honor him.

At the close of the evening, he was asked to make a speech disclosing what his "secret" was for impacting students. Everyone seemed to wonder what made him unique. Just how had he made such a difference in their lives? Rob stood poised at the small oak podium, prepared to answer these profound questions. He cleared his throat and began to speak. He told stories of students who had made right choices about their lives and literally engineered a turnaround for the good. As he concluded, he attempted to summarize his part in the process: "I guess my secret was that I made the move from merely being a teacher to being a mentor to these teens."

Indeed, he had. I had personally watched him all year making priceless investments into the lives of those young people. And tonight, Rob was saying a mouthful. He had become a mentor to so many of them. There was a strange quietness in the room that night. Although no one said it out loud, I am certain the majority of the audience didn't get it. I think they were filled with unspoken confusion: What's the big secret? What's the difference between a teacher and a mentor? The truth is there is often a marked difference in our Western society. While every mentor is, indeed, a teacher, not every teacher is a mentor. I heard a statement years ago that was so profound I decided to make it a personal core value. It goes like this: More time with less people equals greater impact for everyone.

It sounds wrong. If it is right, it certainly is counter intuitive. Think about it for a moment. If I choose to mentor — not just teach — I'm choosing to limit the volume of people I can meet with at one time. But, I can better multiply myself in them. The transaction goes from informational in nature to transformational. The person I mentor is impacted more profoundly, and he's more likely able to reproduce the experience in someone else.

coming to terms

No doubt, the term "mentoring" has become a popular "buzzword." Unfortunately, it has accumulated various definitions on its road to fame. At Rob's award banquet, there were dozens of images that raced across the minds of his audience when he used the word. We all seem to be on different pages.

It will serve us well, then, to offer a working definition at the beginning of this handbook. I have tweaked a definition first developed by Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton:

Mentoring is a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing their wisdom and resources.

The resources vary. Mentoring is a positive dynamic that enables people to develop potential. Since the rash of leadership failures between 1995 and 2005, more people recognize the need for accountability in leadership. Adequate mentoring might have prevented most of these failures. Certainly the kind of mentoring described in this handbook can help prevent failures in leadership and give that needed accountability. Leaders want to finish well. They would welcome mentoring if they saw it as an enhancement to their growth. Mentoring can reduce the probability of leadership failure, provide needed accountability and empower a responsive, potential leader. John C. Crosby of The Uncommon Individual Foundation writes, "Mentoring is a brain to pick, a shoulder to cry on and a kick in the seat of the pants."

In their book *Connecting*, Stanley and Clinton continue with this helpful perspective. Usually when people are first introduced to mentoring, they think of an ideal mentor — a perfect model who can do almost everything. Few of those exist. The myth about mentoring is that it requires some hyper-gifted guru, just dripping with wisdom. A sage. A Moses or Socrates figure. Those people are few and far between. In this handbook we want to put mentoring in the practical realm: Anyone can mentor, provided he/she has learned something from the past and is willing to share with others what he/she has learned.

I remember my first attempts at mentoring. I was filled with the usual sense of inadequacy as I considered what to say to someone that could actually change their life. I finally had to scrap my original stereotypes of white haired, all-wise mentors and simply begin a relationship with someone that I felt I was a step or two ahead of in my own journey. I ended up choosing seven high school students. We met together each week for a structured meeting and then enjoyed several informal experiences that bonded us relationally. All seven of those students became leaders. Three of those seven became executives. The other four became missionaries or ministers. Soon I was mentoring interns where I worked. What a joy it is today to see them leading companies, managing nonprofit organizations, counseling, teaching, working as missionaries and serving in the government or in charitable organizations. I feel like a proud parent!

As an adult, you can mentor others. Whatever you possess — wisdom or a personal strength — that has enabled you to deepen your influence, you can pass on to others. For example, introducing a young professional to the basics of career success is a type of mentoring. There are career mentors, academic mentors, spiritual mentors, financial mentors and personal coaches or mentors. You need to know that there are various styles of mentoring too. According to my research, there are more than a half a dozen different kinds of mentors that can play a role in someone's life. We must stop stereotyping. In Chapter 12, I outline these different kinds of mentors, noting that we all need a variety of them based on the stage of life we are experiencing. In addition, we will naturally flourish serving as a certain kind of mentor (to someone else) based on our own personal identity.

Reading about the heroes of the past, or historical models, is another form of mentoring that can happen anytime. Observing the growth, struggles, responses and decision-making processes of those who have lived before can provide insight, challenge and often practical help for our own situations.

Consider this. Occasionally, a person may enter your life who makes a timely contribution: some wise counsel, an insight, a question or a word of encouragement. This can be considered a mentoring moment. Mentors come for a reason, a season or a lifetime. These "divine contacts" will not usually know how they are being used in your life, but you can take advantage of them as resources that arrive at the right moment. They are, in fact, a sort of mentor to you. This will probably be true for you as well, as you assume the role of a mentor.

There will be moments you will share a simple insight or truth (that you may have picked up years ago), and doing so, you will change the perspective of your mentee forever! There will be times you will "speak into their life" with authority and wisdom — and not realize how profound your words really are. Simply put: People mentoring people is the greatest method for transforming the world!

mentoring through the years

Interestingly, mentoring is not a new concept. For example, mentoring happened in some form in ancient Greek and Hebrew cultures. Both had their own "model" for making disciples. The term "mentor" actually originates from ancient Greek mythology. The Greeks made it an art. There were disciples everywhere. For instance, the philosopher Plato was a disciple of Socrates; and Aristotle was a disciple of Plato; and believe it or not, Alexander the Great was a disciple of Aristotle. What a great line of minds and postulates and hypotheses. Their disciple making process, however, was different than that of the Hebrews in the scriptures. The method and focus was distinct. It is the Hebrew model I am advocating here in this book. Let me explain.

While Americans have embraced the Greek model for learning, the Hebrew model is the cry of this new generation. The Greek model is what I call the "classroom" model. It is about words and information. Even when the Socratic method is used, it's still about a teacher delivering content.

This takes place each week when teachers assume their place up front, and students passively listen to a lecture. It is academic in nature; it is cerebral and cognitive.

It is often passive on the part of the student. And while it is the fastest method to transfer information to another person or group, it is not the most effective method for transforming a life. It is not the preferred mode for today's students to learn. Learning happens much more efficiently through the Hebrew model, where the teacher or mentor invites the student to travel with them. No doubt, the mentor has much to say through verbal instruction, but this is not the only tool in their pocket. They demonstrate the principles they want their mentees to embrace in a real life context. Then they let those mentees try their hand at it themselves. They understand that the best way to learn is to experience something firsthand. Finally, they give time for debriefing and feedback. They provide accountability and assessment. In short, the following table summarizes the contrast between these two learning models:

GREEK MODEL

The Classroom Model

1. Academic
2. Passive
3. Theoretical

HEBREW MODEL

The Coach Model

1. Relational
2. Experiential
3. On-the-job Training

Obviously, these two learning methods received their titles from the culture in which they were originated. Long before Jesus came along and chose twelve men to mentor, the ancient Greek culture was making disciples, as I've mentioned, with Socrates and Plato, Plato and Aristotle, etc. But the mentoring was much more philosophical in nature than with the Hebrew culture. It was more academic than relational. While there was the Socratic method of dialogue involved, it was more passive than experiential. It was, in fact, much more like the classrooms of our schools and churches across the United States than what Hebrews did in ancient Israel. For instance, it would have been common to ask a student from the Greek culture the question: "What subject are you studying?" This would also be very common in our American colleges today. In the Hebrew culture, however, the question was not, "What are you studying?" but rather, "Who are you studying under?" The emphasis was on the mentor not the material. Most of us are familiar with the Hebrew model and perhaps don't even know it. Consider the most popular historical mentoring relationship we know of today.

Jesus and his twelve followers. Jesus treated his disciples or mentees more like apprentices than academicians. They received "on-the-job training." You can imagine how that must have accelerated their learning curve! Can you visualize how much more quickly Simon Peter must have grasped how Jesus dealt with difficult situations when he knew he might be asked to do it the following Thursday? The fact of the matter is: This is what good "mentoring" is all about. It is recognizing that humans "own" principles much more quickly when they are learned from relationship and experience than from a sterile classroom.

the evolution of education

Mentoring is as old as civilization itself. Through this natural relational process, values and experience pass from one generation to another. Throughout history, mentoring was the primary means of passing on knowledge and skills in every field — from Greek philosophers to English blacksmiths — and in every culture. Mentoring took place among Hebrew priests (Eli and Samuel), prophets (Elijah and Elisha) and leaders (Moses and Joshua). But in our day and age, the learning process has shifted. It now relies primarily on computers, classrooms, books and videos.

Thus, the relational connection between the knowledge-and-experience giver and the receiver has weakened or is nonexistent. Society is now rediscovering that the process of learning and maturing needs time and many kinds of relationships. The "self-made" man or woman is a myth and, though some claim it, few aspire to it anymore. It leaves people relationally deficient and narrow-minded. The resurgence of mentoring in virtually every occupational field and area of life is a response to this discovery. "Please mentor me," is the spoken and unspoken request expressed by so many today.

CASE STUDY: HELEN KELLER

Most Americans are familiar with the story of Helen Keller. Helen was the blind, deaf and dumb mute who acted more like an animal than a human in her early years. She would have grown up to be nothing more than a vegetable if left alone. She was so unruly that her family hired a teacher named Anne Sullivan to mentor her. Their goal was to simply enable Helen become healthy so that she wouldn't damage the people or things in the house. Anne entered her life early on and began to work with Helen on her vocabulary, personal habits, perception/recognition, manners and speech. Anne's inspiration was Helen's own growth from a disabled mute to a valuable citizen in society. Because she had been transformed, she determined she was going to help others, like Helen Keller. By the time Helen reached adulthood, she was a changed woman. When the two of them met, young Helen was in a cage and would only growl at her new mentor. By the conclusion of Anne's work, Helen was communicating efficiently, eating by herself and taking care of her own personal needs. Anne Sullivan had brought about an absolute revolution in Helen Keller, and helped to build a self-sufficient woman.

This wasn't the end of the story, however. In the later years of her life, Anne Sullivan had a relapse of her previous condition. She became physically ill and went blind. Ironically, now the "mentor" was in need of someone to work with her again. Can you guess who stepped forward to fill the role? It was Helen Keller. She returned the favor to her mentor; she was able to give back to the one who had given so much to her.

Like all good mentors, Anne Sullivan illustrates a number of the specific ways that mentors help mentees:

- Ability to readily see potential in a person
- Tolerance with mistakes and abrasiveness in order to see that
- Potential develop
- Flexibility in responding to people and circumstances
- Patience, knowing that time and experience are needed for development

- Perspective — the vision to see ahead to suggest the next steps a mentee needs
- Gifts and abilities that build up and encourage others; they
- Empower mentees
- Timely words of counsel and insight, even when it requires correction
- Resources such as letters, articles, books, contacts with others, etc.
- Opportunities for that young mentee to gain experience on their own
- Evaluation — taking the time to assess the progress of the mentee

the bottom line

Most mentoring stories share some common features. They started with someone in need. This person met someone further along in experience who had something to contribute to that need. A relationship was established. The more experienced person shared what he had been through or learned, meeting the needs of the first person. With the acceptance of what was shared, the power to grow through a situation was passed from the mentor to the mentee. It was not just a sharing and receiving of information — actual change took place. We refer to this transfer between mentor and mentee as "empowerment." This process is the heart of mentoring.

Mentoring is popular at present. Its popularity attests to its potential usefulness for leadership development. It also speaks of the tremendous relational vacuum in an individualistic society and its accompanying lack of accountability. In *Habits of the Heart*, the authors see individualism as an American asset turned into a liability. Americans cling to personal independence when they desperately need interdependence. I don't believe people are at their best when they are self-sufficient, moving through life alone. To experience healthy "community" will require recognition of this need and the courage to change. In no other area is this change so urgently needed than in leadership development. Acknowledgment of this need is partially responsible for the groundswell of interest toward mentoring. The question: "Will you mentor me?" is being expressed in a variety of ways in every arena: business, family, military, education, politics and the church. This swelling cry for meaningful relationships can be a springboard to learning and growth via the art of mentoring.

life giving mentors: the road less traveled

I no longer think the need is merely for mentors. I believe the need of the hour is for "life giving" mentors. We need life-giving leaders, bosses, teachers, pastors and coaches. To understand this idea, it's best to examine the two most common roads that educators travel.

You can tell almost instantly if a mentor is on the traditional path or the "road less traveled." In the Jewish Pentateuch, we read about the Garden of Eden, which contained the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil in the center of it. These two trees represent two different approaches to life and teaching: one is life-giving; the other, life-grabbing. The two most common paths are...

LIFE GRABBING

1. Stress and competition
2. Thrives on rule and routines
3. Narrow and rigid
4. Teaches subjects
5. Asks: What do I have?
6. Success built on competence
7. Focus is on techniques
8. Imposes control over mentees
9. Goal is to complete the lesson plan
10. Acts out to duty and obligation
11. Content oriented
12. Repulsive: I keep score
13. Result: Tired performance

LIFE GIVING

1. Innocence and peace
2. Thrives on relationship
3. Open and relational
4. Teaches students
5. Asks: What do they need?
6. Success built on connection
7. Focus is on atmosphere
8. Expresses confidence in mentees
9. Goal is to complete the student
10. Acts out of devotion and gratitude
11. Change oriented
12. Magnetic: I keep giving
13. Result: Empowered service

observations on these two approaches

Let me take a moment and offer some observations on this idea. Life giving people make the best mentors. However, time usually takes its toll on us. As we age, we tend to get cynical. We no longer keep giving — we keep score. Examine these statements and see if you agree with them.

1. *We often begin our career as life-giving, but drift into a life-grabbing posture over time.*
2. *As we progress in leadership, we take pride in our competence more than our connection.*
3. *Leadership built upon rules is easier to implement than leadership based upon relationship.*
4. *Academic pressure or economic pressure fosters life-grabbing habits and attitudes.*
5. *It is possible to discipline students and even fire staff while in a life-giving posture.*

6. *Life-grabbing people seek to be in control; Life-giving people seek to be under control.*

symptoms of life grabbing leadership

A school or organization that is managed by a life-grabbing perspective may appear on the surface to be fit as a fiddle. However, upon deeper examination, you find these symptoms:

1. *Leadership nitpicks and keeps score on others, both staff and students.*
2. *Leadership is empty of power and offers no joy to staff or students.*
3. *Leadership is suspicious of the worst in students and lays plans accordingly.*
4. *Leadership's goal is merely damage control rather than trusting students with authority.*
5. *Leadership doesn't believe in faculty and students nor does it bring out the best in them.*
6. *Leadership is more like a police force than a training ground.*
7. *Leadership is unable to develop and multiply quality leaders.*

the heart of life giving vs. life grabbing mentors

I will be honest with you. I have a "Tarzan gift." I can jump from tree to tree, back and forth, several times a day. In the words of the Pentateuch again, I move from the "tree of life" to the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." One moment I can be life-giving, and the next I can be rigid and grabbing all the life I can get from others. I may start the day believing the best about others, but by noon, I am suspicious and calculating again. This makes me very unattractive to others, including my mentees. I have attempted to summarize below the "heart" of both approaches.

LIFE GRABBING MENTORS

1. Life is scarce
2. You play Defense (Maintain)
3. Escape loss
4. Reactive
5. Guard and protect
6. Paralyzed: Hold oh!
7. Does the bare minimum
8. Thinks: win / lose

LIFE GIVING MENTORS

1. Life is abundant
2. You play offense (Create)
3. Pursue vision
4. Proactive
5. Risk and seize opportunity
6. Dynamic: Let go!
7. Walks the "second mile"
8. Thinks: win / win

My hope is that as you pursue emerging leaders to mentor, you will approach your role from a life-giving perspective. Life giving people are irresistible.

Our organization, Growing Leaders, Inc., for instance, has seen the results of positive mentoring.

A student in Cairo, Egypt who was mentored decided to return the favor by beginning an orphanage in his homeland.

Two students, in their senior year of college, launched a leadership training event on their campus in 2002 that still exists today, challenging fellow students to become life-giving leaders. This event now attracts dozens of other schools.

A student in Indonesia became angry at the sex trade among children in Southeast Asia. At the encouragement of his mentor, he decided to launch an organization that would locate these kids, rescue them and rehabilitate them.

A student was so transformed by understanding his life-mission that he has created a networking website reaching hundreds of thousands of other young adults to help them identify their calling and connect with others like them.

A high school student who watched a television program on slave trade in the Sudan and Uganda decided he could not allow that injustice to continue without getting involved. He found a mentor and gained the confidence to launch a movement that raises money to set slaves free in those African nations.

I hope you sense something of the potential that mentoring may have for you in unleashing the insight in your life through special relationships with others. Perhaps you are beginning to sense that you want to establish relationships with others that will make a difference. May this be said of you as you mentor others.

a mentor is a people grower

He has a sort of green thumb when it comes to handling folks.
He'll listen to their troubles; He'll chuckle at their jokes.
Somehow they know his interest is genuine and true;
And right before your eyes you'll see them grow an inch or two.
You'll see their faces blossom out in smiles of budding cheer.
You know they've found a ray of hope you drive away their fear.

You know he's sowed the seeds of faith and showered them with love,
And made them sense the presence of the good Lord up above. He
clears out all the weeds of doubt and fear and hate and greed.
He gives them room to breathe. He seems to sense their every need.
He nurtures them with praises for the good things that they've done and
trains them to look upward
And to stand tall in the sun.
He has a sort of green thumb like a farmer with the sod
But his work is growing people in the image of his God.
~Author unknown

Probably the greatest word picture for what mentoring is all about can be summarized in the little story of a boy and his dad walking down a rocky road one evening. After stumbling and falling to the ground, the boy looked up at his father and said, "Dad, why don't you watch where I'm going?" I believe we can say with great accuracy that this is what mentoring is all about - watching where others are going.

before you go any further...

Before you tread any further through this handbook, let me ask you some questions. Please reflect on them prior to reading the next chapter. Consider these questions as friendly accountability. I want to ensure, as much as I can, that this book won't simply provide mental stimulation, but mentor application!

1. Do you have any transparent relationships (friendships)? Who are those people?
2. Do you have people fulfilling these roles for you?
 - a. A Mentor? _____
 - b. An Accountability Partner? _____
 - c. A Mentee? _____
3. Do you know one or two people that could benefit from your mentoring?
4. What would be the best way to approach them? What might be the best time?



Is mentoring really necessary? Wouldn't it be possible to pull off our jobs and prepare future leaders without all the trouble it requires? Is it possible to impact the people around us and not bother with "one-to-one" mentoring?

These are good questions. They are ones that leaders have knowingly or unknowingly been asking for hundreds of years. Reflect with me for a minute on history.

Consider colonial times in England and Europe. In past centuries, master tradesmen deliberately chose young apprentices to work alongside of them. It wasn't because those young men increased their profits immediately or sped up their work. My guess is it took longer to get a job done when the master blacksmith attempted to teach someone the trade. But the master was intentional about placing an apprentice nearby because he knew his trade was always one generation away from extinction. He knew one day he would need help. If he didn't develop someone else, his practice would cease when he died. These kinds of apprenticeships helped businesses move forward. There was no formal program or classes — just mentoring.

Consider the Dark Ages. Society was shaped by both political leaders as well as church leaders. During this period, all but a small portion of the Church world refused to make such personal and painstaking investments. Interestingly, the practice of mentoring began its decline with Constantine's reign.

In 313 A.D., when Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, Church members began to choose the easy route. The practice of faith moved from organic to programmatic. It became institutionalized. Parishes began to rely on the paid clergy to do ministry. The making of disciples, through mentoring relationships, came grinding to a slow crawl. Eventually, Christianity came to be associated with stained glass, impersonal worship services and institutions. I believe this contributed to society's plunge into the "Dark Ages." Any mentoring that did occur was predominantly confined to monasteries and disassociated from society at large. There were few life-giving relationships. Unfortunately, this left the Church in a pitiful state of ignorance and compromise, which affected society as a whole.

How about today? Is mentoring making a difference on our culture? Consider this: I read recently that one half of the Nobel Peace Prize winners last year were mentored by former Peace Prize laureates. Is that a coincidence? I don't think so. The Harvard Business Review ran a cover article in 1983 entitled "Everyone Who Makes It Has a Mentor." The article reported a study of the top Fortune 500 executives in America. Each of them was asked questions to determine what they had in common. It was a wide variety of executives — male and female, old and young, single and married, self-made and family-groomed. Interestingly, only one answer came up every time. Can you guess it? Every one of these CEO's said they had a mentor. Each had someone they could call in the middle of the night, if need be, to seek their wisdom and counsel on tough issues.

This is why Growing Leaders, Inc. has included MENTORING as one of our core values. We follow that value with this descriptive phrase:

MENTORING
leaders cannot be mass produced but
are developed through life on life mentoring

the great need on campus

I believe mentoring is no longer a mere luxury among a few students today. Mentoring is an essential element for students to not only survive but to also thrive in the world they're entering. They need the wisdom and encouragement that experienced adults can give.

The great need on the school campus today is: developmental relationships. These are relationships that exist for the purpose of growing the individuals over an extended period of time. Students cry out for a "coach" more than a classroom. Why? Let me suggest another phrase I am convinced of after thirty years of mentoring:

There is no life change without life exchange

We all need mentors — but for different reasons based on the life-stage we are experiencing. I need certain kinds of mentors early in my career and different kinds later in life. Reflect on these two statements below:

1. *We need mentors when we're young because we lack experience.*
2. *We need mentors when we're older because we fall into ruts.*

The different life stages require different kinds of mentors, for different reasons, but we all need mentors all of our lives.

do you want to impress or impact people?

Do we really need the art of mentoring? It depends on your goal. Consider this truth: Leadership can be viewed on three levels. From least effective to most effective, these levels may be defined this way:

Level One: Impress

The leader impresses followers. This can be done with little or no relationship. It requires only the will of the leader to be involved. He must want to leave a memorable impression on the followers. It can be done at a distance — a concert, a conference, a convention.

Level Two: Influence

The leader influences followers. This can be done with some relationship between the two. It requires the will of the follower to be involved. He must want to be influenced by the leader. This usually involves a connection between leader and follower at some point.

Level Three: Impact

The leader impacts followers. This can only be done through intimate relationship. It requires both the will of the leader and follower to be involved. They must agree to accountability and growth. It usually happens up close and personal.

Notice that all three levels change the follower in some way, but life-change dramatically increases as the conditions of level three are met. Level one can be done within the context of the masses, level two requires a bit more relationship and commitment, but level three can only occur when both parties agree to connect and commit to each other. Impact requires some form of mentoring.

At this point in my life, I have intentionally mentored over three hundred people, either one-on-one or in a small group. I have failed as often as I have succeeded in being and doing exactly what my mentee needed at the moment. I have cringed and cried when I've thought about some of my earlier days attempting to "pour my life" into someone but not knowing just how to do it. Thank God for merciful mentees who were happy to gain whatever they could from someone like me. As I reflect for a moment, however, I am convinced of at least one truth: No matter how poorly I played my role as mentor, those relationships were always better than if I'd only performed on some platform in an auditorium. In other words, even my feeble attempts at mentoring are better than my best attempts at impressing someone from the stage. Good, honest attempts at developmental relationships are better than no attempts at all.

*Students today don't want a "sage on a stage,"
but rather a "guide on the side."*

Author Dawson Trotman popularized an axiom decades ago that has directed the course of many successful training programs. He followed it during his career and mentored many great leaders before his death over fifty years ago. Great leaders throughout history demonstrated this principle time and time again with their followers. It could be called the Principle of the Narrow Wedge. Read it over a couple of times. It goes like this:

"More time with less people equals greater impact for everyone."

what makes mentoring unique?

Mentoring is unique from most educational programs in that it is so focused. The surest way to secure your impact on people is to enter an accountability relationship with the conscious objective to produce measurable growth. This cannot be done with large groups. In fact, most small groups in residence halls, corporations or churches today don't mentor people well. Fellowship, love and nurture are all naturally fostered in them, but true mentoring is conspicuously absent.

So often we define mentoring in broad, all-inclusive terms and miss what is really meant by the practice of developmental relationships and life-on-life investment.

For instance, while it is possible to inadvertently mentor someone in the course of normal academic programming, it is rare. Mentoring usually does not happen effectively in a large lecture hall, a typical Sunday school class or even an average small group community. Consequently, as you consider mentoring people in a small group context or group leadership training, please note the distinctive characteristics of a mentoring relationship below. The following is a table that contrasts what normally happens in a small group versus what happens in an effective mentoring relationship. While there is some overlap in the relational focus, note the differences that set mentoring apart from fellowship groups. My challenge to you is to become a true mentor to the people you serve.

Small Groups

1. Focus on relationships
2. Context is community
3. Discussion oriented
4. Normal size: ten to fifteen
5. Value depends on the attendees
6. Content based on the leader
7. Leader's goal is collective
8. Progress is often sporadic
9. Success measured by group health
10. Low level of accountability
11. Community (heart and mind)
12. Purpose is to meet and interact

Mentoring

1. Focus is on giving and receiving direction
2. Context is personal
3. Application oriented
4. Normal size: one-on-one to one-to-three
5. Value depends on the group mentor
6. Content based on the need of the mentee
7. Mentor's goal is intentional growth investment
8. Progress is made by predetermined goals
9. Success measured by life change of mentees
10. High, intense level of accountability
11. Direction and leadership (heart, will and mind)
12. Purpose is to reach potential

Very often, two people enter a mentoring relationship — where one determines to help the other reach their potential — but alas, the relationship eventually reduces itself to fellowship. Mentoring is more emotionally expensive than fellowship. We naturally migrate to “small group” relationships but must intentionally work at mentoring relationships. Sometimes, it is hard work.

Consequently, the answer to the question, “Is mentoring really necessary?” can only be answered when we respond to a second question: How deeply do we want to impact people? I trust your answer to both questions will lead you into deep reflection.

becoming relevant for an epic generation

Let me give you one more reason why I believe mentoring is so essential today. Students are growing up in a very different world than the one I grew up in. Their attention spans are low, their demand for hands-on experience is greater, and their expectations for their education are high.

One way to avoid a mentee's loss of interest or lack of commitment is to maintain a high level of relevance as you interact. Not only should mentors keep the conversation on the key issues facing their mentee, but you should also transmit truths in an EPIC fashion.

Becoming an EPIC Mentor

E – *EXPERIENTIAL* (They don't want a one-way lecture, but an experience)

How can you practice this style of teaching and mentoring?

P – *PARTICIPATORY* (They want to participate in the outcomes of the meeting)

How can you practice this style of teaching and mentoring?

I – *IMAGE DRIVEN* (They grew up with MTV, Digital cameras, DVDs and video)

How can you practice this style of teaching and mentoring?

C – *CONNECTED* (They are connected technologically and relationally)

How can you practice this style of teaching and mentoring?

The traditional education style of lecture, drill and test is declining fast. As Dr. Leonard Sweet reminds us, students[®] today have moved from a Gutenberg world to a Google world. This gives me all the more incentive to become a relevant mentor.

At Growing Leaders, we sponsor an event on college campuses called: The Habitudes Experience (Habitudes are images that form leadership habits and attitudes). The event is a portable conference that challenges students to think and act like leaders.

In this event, we attempt to foster mentoring relationships between adults and students. The day is an EPIC day, as we reveal leadership principles using a variety of mediums:

- An image on the screen
- Music
- Video
- Dramatic sketches
- Activities
- Interviews
- Small group discussion
- Panels
- Journal Time

While it is a lot of work to host these events, they are much more memorable than the typical “talking head” conference, where one speaker monopolizes the time up front. May you do the work necessary to connect with your students today.



I recognize it sounds cliché, but we are living in exciting times.

I began working with students back in the 1970s. Those students made up the tail end of the Baby Boomer generation. This generation was known as the anti-establishment generation. They questioned authority. Through the 1980 and 1990s, I worked with the Baby Busters, or Generation X. This generation was known as the disillusioned and disconnected generation. They ignored authority. Today, we are working with Generation Y, or the Millennial generation — students born between 1984 and 2002. They are an optimistic, digital and an overachieving generation. They choose their authority.

In short, Millennials are much more likely to work with established authorities than the previous generations — but they will choose them based on their credibility. They are actually looking for mentors and are determined to find them so they can reach their lofty goals. They think out of the box and need mentors to give them a moral compass and a sense of reality. I can summarize the last three generations with these statements:

Baby Boomers asked: Why?

Generation X asked: Why ask why?

Millennials ask: Why not?

a summary of the millennial generation

Let me share the good news and bad news about this generation — and why it is so crucial to focus on them as mentors. Let's begin with the "good news." The following list is the result of research we've done with eight organizations in an attempt to summarize the qualities of Generation Y, or specifically the Millennial generation:

the good news

So how many of them are out there? The Millennial generation promises to be the largest generation in American history. Already, they rival the Baby Boomers in size (78 million), and with immigration, there may be upwards of one hundred million of them before they all reach adulthood. Worldwide, they are massive. About half the world's population is twenty-one years old or younger. The following is a list of characteristics:

they feel special

Movies, government focus and parents have all made this generation believe they are vital to our future. Most of them feel good about themselves. In fact, they're often preoccupied with themselves; however, some surveys found a contradictory self-assessment — they are happy with their lives, but they worry a lot about themselves and their future. Their self-absorbed lives can be alarming. On Mother's Day 2006, USA Today carried an article on what young people were giving their moms for her special day. Thousands had decided to give themselves something in honor of their mother. The gifts ranged from getting a haircut, to putting money in their own bank account, to cleaning up their apartment. And the mothers were pleased with those gifts. Their children played such a central role in their own happiness, that mother's felt great about the vicarious gift.

they love family

They rely on family as a sanctuary from the troubles of their world. They've been sheltered by many kid-safety rules and devices. They grew up with the "Baby On Board" sign on the mini-van. Many are the focus of what I call "parental paranoia." The result? They love their family. If they aren't a part of a nuclear family, they create one (i.e. gangs and unorthodox communities). In a recent annual U.S. survey of teenagers, students were asked: Who is your hero? For the first time in twenty years, the number one response was not an athlete. Number one was: mom and dad. Number two was: grandma and grandpa.

they are confident

Millennials believe they can make a difference. Many already boast about their power and potential, even as kids. They will be more self-reliant and ambitious than Generation X. A surprising percentage has started their own business before reaching age twenty-one. They don't seem to lack the confidence to put their ideas into action. Many believe they will take part in changing the world. In one recent study, 82% of college students said they believed the next "Bill Gates" was in their generation. 51% said they believed they knew the next "Bill Gates." 24% said they believed they are the next "Bill Gates."

they are mediavores

These students are addicted to media. It's not uncommon for them to do homework, listen to a CD, watch TV and interact online simultaneously. They give new meaning to multi-tasking. They can handle fast-paced images in commercials, and they love the rush of high speed internet searches, text messaging their buddy or locating friends on Facebook. No doubt, there is a danger to their familiarity with technology. One private university I recently visited reported that 60% of their male students were watching pornography on the internet. And an equal amount of women were participating in chat rooms, which can be just as harmful. Technology is a mixed blessing, but they are addicted to it.

they are team oriented

Think about it. They grew up with Barney, played soccer, learned in groups at school and often wore uniforms. Community is as important as individual accomplishments. Many date in groups. Some only want a leadership position if they can serve alongside a team and share the responsibility. On the DISC profile, one research study discovered that almost half of these Millennials indicated they were high "I" in the test. They are people-persons. They love relationships even though their people skills are often poor. One book called *Bowling Alone* suggested a difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials. The book said while Baby Boomers are bowling alone on Wednesday nights, Millennials are playing soccer in teams.

they are global

This generation promises to build relationships all over the world. They will be the most mobile group ever. They have itchy feet and want to travel, just like they have on the internet.

Those involved in a local church can attest to the fact that short-term mission trips are on the rise and have been for over fifteen years. Young people want to experience a new culture and what life looks like around the world. 50% of the Millennial generation surveyed plan on doing some of their college studies overseas. They want to travel and experience new places and people each year.

they are pressured

They've been pushed to study hard, avoid personal risks, and capitalize on opportunities their family has afforded them. Schedules are tight for them and their parents; they live with stress. I saw a cartoon recently which showed two school girls leaving the field after soccer practice. One of them said to the other: "Wow! You got fifteen minutes between soccer practice and violin lessons? What are you gonna' do with all that free time?" Whether its pressure from parents, school testing programs, coaches or themselves— these students feel the stress of being a super-kid. They've been pushed to make the grade, make the team and later, make the money. The outcome of this is ill-adjusted adults. Just five years ago, a book was released entitled: Quarter Life Crisis. The book reports a parallel to the "mid-life crisis" from the Baby Boomers. There's an alarming amount of twenty-five year olds who are clinically depressed and seeing a therapist because they reach their dream as quickly as they'd hoped.

they are harmonious

For the first time in decades, this generation is cooperative and conventional. They take pride in improving their behavior and often are more comfortable with traditional values than parents. George Barna believes there are at least twenty different teenage subcultures existing in the United States today. Teenagers often belong to multiple subcultures. Sometimes because they are transitioning from one to another.

Sometimes because they have multiple interests that require variety in their tribal loyalties, and sometimes because they are searching for their place in the larger culture. However, while we still hear about high school shootings from time to time, this generation has experienced far less of that sort of thing than in the previous generation. For instance, at Columbine High School, the two killers might have had a huge trench-coat mafia group to identify with had they attended school twenty years earlier. At Columbine in 1999, however, the school was full of cheerleaders and jocks. They just didn't fit in and the only recourse they felt was logical was violence.

they are generous

They not only enjoy accomplishment, but they also enjoy giving away their resources. They want to serve their communities. 50% of teenagers are active in community service; they feel it's their duty. I have been in missionary festivals where an offering is received for a missionary couple who was about to leave for their international assignment. I have marveled when those offerings have been upwards of \$50,000. Students will empty out their purses and wallets if they see a cause worth giving to. One government study reported that the average teenager has \$87 a week to spend. For many, it's easy come, easy go. Sadly, these same students possess a financial knowledge deficit. More than half admit they have no financial knowledge; only 5% feel very knowledgeable. Both high school and collegians affirm that their parents are the #1 influence on finances. Half of college students owe at least \$10,000 in student loans. The average graduate owes more than \$20,000.

they are optimistic achievers

They may be the best-educated, best-behaved adults in the nation's history. They are full of hope. They aren't as cynical as Generation X. They want to make a difference; optimism drives them. While the last five years has seen a drop in this optimism (since 9/11/01) from the former fifteen years, there is still a sense in which Millennials are saying: "Yes, the world is messed up — but we are going to fix it." Unlike the previous two generations, they believe the world can and will get better. Sometimes, this flies in the face of wisdom. It has been said: Generation X struggled with authority. Millennials struggle with reality. This just might be true. But their unwavering optimism has already driven them to action. In 1997, an Aurora Elementary School divided all their fifth and sixth grade students into small groups. Then, they gave each of these small groups a different geographical region of the world to study and write a paper. One group of 10-11 year old kids received Sudan, Africa. They had no idea what kind of horrific place the Sudan is to live. Torture, civil war, religious persecution and slave trade are still going on in that nation. When those students discovered that slave trade was still going on today, they pushed their paper aside and began to talk. One student boldly asked: "What are we going to do about this?" Then, without any prompting from adults, they brainstormed how they could address the problem. Finally they came up with a solution that worked for them. They began to pool their allowance money and put it in a kitty. Then, they found an organization online that received donations and with them bought slaves and set them free.

That little group of students began sending their money in, and one by one, they set slaves free in Sudan. By year's end, they had held fundraisers and raised \$50,000 for the cause.

As I reflected on this, I thought to myself how unique these kids are. If that had happened when Baby Boomers were kids, we would have demonstrated or rioted or held a sit-in. Generation X would have written some angst-filled song about the whole thing. But the Millennials are doing something positive to change it.

the bad news

Unfortunately, the news is not all good news. While this generation promises great potential for good, when we examine what's happening globally, it is sobering. Every year, I am in front of between 50,000 and 60,000 students, staff and parents talking about this next generation — who they are and what adults can do to mentor them well. It always makes for a lively question and answer time. One question seems to come up everywhere: What is happening around the world? In other words, are there any international trends we can spot that let us know what is coming in this generation of kids? I must confess, I certainly don't have the final answer to this question, but let me share two sobering facts that ignite me to work even harder to provide a moral compass for students today:

FACT: Today, almost half of the world's population is twenty-one years old or younger.

While people are living longer, the birthrate is passing older generations — in some countries at an alarming rate. Today, the average age in China and India is mid-twenties. Many people in African nations won't even see their 30th birthday because of the AIDS pandemic. As I mentioned, in the U.S., the Millennial generation is already rivaling the Baby boomer population in size, at seventy-eight million. Some sociologists say it may grow to one hundred million strong in the U.S. due to immigration. We are a reflection of the globe. The earth's population is growing younger, and they desperately need guidance.

FACT: When there is a bulge in the youth population, there is always violence.

Gunnar Heinson, a social scientist at the University of Bremen (Germany), writes that when 15-29 year olds make up more than 30% of the population, violence occurs; when large percentages are under fifteen, violence is often imminent.

The causes for such violence can be immaterial. Whether the country is rich or poor, whether they experience good conditions or bad, violence and passion follow a bulging population of young people. This explains Ireland ninety years ago. It explains Africa over the last fifty years. It explains Latin America in the 1980s and Europe in the 1500s. For that matter, it explains the violence America experienced in the 1960s. It was primarily the young Baby boom population rioting on the university campuses or in the streets.

what will come of this youth bulge?

Today, there are sixty-seven countries where a "youth bulge" exists (that is, populations where more than 30% are young adults or kids). Sixty of those countries are presently in civil war or are experiencing mass killings. Heinson has written an eye-opening book called, *Sons and World Power*. In it, he documents this history of youth and violence. It matters not if the countries are civilized or non-civilized. It is more about the next generation finding a place to express their identity. Without healthy guidance, they'll join any cause and enter into anarchy. Don't believe me? Just watch them. Of the twenty-seven biggest "youth bulge" nations, thirteen are Muslim. Those kids will find expression even if they take it out on the rest of the world.

The U.S. has been involved in Iraq for years now. It provides a sobering case study. Like many of its neighbors, nearly half of the population in Iraq is under eighteen years old. According to Iraq's Ministry of Education, 70% of elementary school kids are no longer attending classes regularly. Hassan Ali, a sociologist at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs says, "These children will come to believe in the principles of force and violence. There's no question that society as a whole is going to feel the effects in the future..." This generation of kids in that part of the world is growing up unemployed, undereducated, traumatized and, among boys in particular, ripe for vengeful appeals of militias and insurgent groups. According to *Newsweek* magazine (January 22, 2007), it isn't only the Iraqi kids either. From the Middle East to Europe to America, violence may well beget violence around the world for years to come. French scholar, Gilles Kepel, author of *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, warns that many of these young people, raised on anger and fear, are potentially rebels without clear causes. "What will their jihads become?" he asks. "Are they going to grow up to kill each other, or will they turn their weapons against the West?"

Very often we blame the poor conditions of such countries in conflict. Not so. In El Salvador, for example, the explosion of political killing in the 1970s and 80s was preceded by a 27% rise in per capita income. Poverty wasn't the problem. In reality, the problem is that in a youth-bulge society, there are not enough positions to provide all these young men with prestige and standing. They want to be known for something. In America during the 1960s, college campuses were scenes of demonstrations and riots that often ended in violence. The issue wasn't poverty — the U.S. was experiencing a healthy economy. So what was it about? No doubt there were a variety of reasons, but one that's often overlooked is the Baby Boomers were coming of age. We had a youth bulge. Young people long to find expression. They want to make a difference...and they will... whatever that means.

Globally speaking, it appears this next generation will provide a clash between optimism and nihilism. Students from high technology nations, full of optimism, plan to give their lives to improve the world's conditions. Yet, there are young people — especially from terrorist countries — giving their lives up in order to take the lives of others. They are the ultimate in nihilism.

Here's my point: If we're serious about transforming the world, we have to be serious about investing in this next generation. Here's my question: What are you willing to sacrifice to invest in them? What we do today as adults will no doubt determine who they will become as adults.



I've lost count of the adults I've seen who have thrown their arms up in the air, in despair over this new generation of kids and said, "Ah! Kids today! They're worse than ever!"

While this statement may be coming from an adult who's simply speaking from their personal experience, statistics are clear that this statement is wrong. If you examine what's going on nationwide, you'll see that this new generation of young adults are, indeed, different — but in a good way. Their grades, their behavior and their passion to change the world has gone up. Teen pregnancy, drug use and alcohol abuse have gone down. These kids may prove to be much more valuable to society than either of the last two generations. They may be the best educated, most informed generation in history. In fact, for the first time, this generation doesn't need leaders to get information. Thanks to the internet, an audience of kids can know more about a subject than the speaker does. What they need is leaders who can help them interpret the information they receive. In other words, they don't need leaders to access data. They need leaders to process data. That's where mentors come in. We hold the key. If we're going to focus on this next generation, the Millennials, we need to know who they are, how they think and what they need. Let's take a look at how their brain works and how we can connect with them.

how do they like to communicate?

Several months ago, we hosted another focus group of students (ages 16-24) and asked them: What are your preferred methods of communication?