

# Mentoring a Returning Citizen

**How to Guide Those Freed to a Better Life in Christ  
Facilitator's Guide**



**With: Brad Price and Jesse Zahrt**



**WELS Prison Ministry – [wels.net/pm](http://wels.net/pm)**

# Mentoring a Returning Citizen

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How to Guide Those Freed to a Better Life in Christ

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## Introduction

### What Is "Mentoring a Returning Citizen"?

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You may find the title of this course a bit puzzling. It's easy enough to understand what a "mentor" is. It's someone who serves as a role model, example, guide, or instructor for someone else. It's also easy to understand what a citizen is. It's someone who lives and belongs somewhere, who fits in as a part of society in a neighborhood, community, town, city, state, or country. It's also easy to understand what it means to "return." Obviously, it means to go back to a place or position where you were once before.

What a person may not realize from reading the course's title is that we're talking about someone returning to society from jail or prison. They've been away from loved ones, friends, their community and their lifestyle for varying lengths of time—some for a very long time. And while they were away, things changed. Their family and loved ones changed, their neighborhood and community changed, and society overall

changed. And hopefully they also changed and want to keep changing from the person they were before—the person that collided with the law and ended up behind bars.

Being a mentor to such a person is certainly being a role model, example, guide, instructor, and more. In short, mentoring a returning citizen means walking with an individual who's been released from prison or jail through their process of reentry into life on the outside, seeing them through the challenges they're going to face as they reacclimate to society. Even more importantly, as a Christian mentor, you are walking together with them towards Christ. You're building a bond of friendship with someone whose experiences and background may be vastly different from your own.

### Why Mentor a Returning Citizen?

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Everything the believer in Christ does, they ultimately do to glorify God. If a believer in Jesus is going to mentor a person returning to society after being incarcerated, their ultimate motive is going to be to glorify God and give thanks for the blessings they have in Jesus. You want to use your gifts in a God-pleasing way. It's not as scary as you think, and you can gain skills to be even more effective and efficient in doing it.

Glorifying God and helping others at a point in their lives where they really need it is a source of joy. It's like watching a child grow and take his or her first steps: you see all the little "wins" and accomplishments along the way, and you're sharing in those. Helping someone grow and growing yourself all work together to bring you a sense of purpose and accomplishment. You're doing something

important, and you're glad about that. You may well find what other mentors have expressed to be true: "This is the best hour of my week."

As your faith deepens, so will your sense of humility as you do research and study Scripture to share with your mentee. You as a mentor will probably get more out of what you do than your mentee will. You're teaching them, but they are also teaching you. God will use you to work in and on the person you're working with, but God may also use that person to work in and on you!



### **Unbelievable Growth Lies Ahead!**

One mentor expressed, "I've grown more in my two years of mentoring than I did in the sixty years of my spiritual life before that. I hardly recognize myself—the growth has been so dramatic."

You may wonder if you are equipped for this ministry. The course will help you evaluate that. It will also help equip you for the work you are striving to undertake. In addition, you will grow in your abilities and readiness as you practice along the way.

Learning to mentor someone is a vital skill to have. You could probably do it without training. Anyone can walk up to someone, sense where they need help and advice, and give that help and advice to them. But you could also say the wrong thing. You could turn them away from the Christian help they really need.

This course is designed to mitigate against that. It's put together to give you tools for your toolbox which you can use to say and do the right things to help someone get back on their feet after being in jail or in prison. You will learn to be clearer and more concise in your approach so you won't have to double back and waste valuable time.



### **Do You Have What It Takes?**

Ideally, all of Scripture's qualifications for anyone teaching the Word of God apply to those who are mentoring. See Titus 1:7-9, for example. Being spiritually mature and emotionally balanced are important. So are being humble, slow to speak, teachable, and patient. No one is any of these things perfectly except Jesus. He is our Savior, substitute, and role model for all of these. That's why having a living faith in Jesus is the most important qualification from which all the others spring.

Even if, after taking the course, you decide that mentoring isn't for you, you're still going to learn skills that will benefit you in many areas of life. You're going to learn conversational skills that can help you talk to coworkers, family members, and anyone else who might enter your life. Some skills, like goal

setting, identifying obstacles to meeting those goals, and formulating an action plan, are valuable enough to use in your own life.

Following Scripture's advice to be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19), in this course you're learning how to work patiently with the person you are mentoring. Just being able to walk up to a person, generate conversation with them, read their body language, and start building a relationship is a skill that can be used beyond just mentoring. The course may not make extraverts out of introverts, but it does teach basic skills for talking to people.

What you're pursuing is a Christian ministry. The goal is serving others in Christ with the overarching purpose of sharing Christ and his gospel. You will be talking about sin. You will be talking about forgiveness in Christ. You will be sharing both law and gospel with the people you serve. For some mentees it will be the first time they've heard the good news about Jesus.



### **You're Sharing in Their First Steps to Freedom**

As parents are overjoyed to see their child take their first steps, eat their first birthday cake, and go off on their first day of school, mentors rejoice in their mentees' first steps to freedom and a new life of walking in the Savior's love.

Sharing your faith with a mentee is like telling a child the Savior's gospel for the first time and watching their faces light up when, through the Holy Spirit, they "get it." Others may know parts of their Bibles quite well, but they may not be aware of how it all fits together and continually points to Christ.

Mentoring a returning citizen is also a very freeing and enlightening experience. You experience the freedom—and the confidence that goes along with it—of assisting someone from a background and culture that may be very different from your own. Doing that tears down perceived walls and builds bridges across rivers and canyons you never thought you could cross.

### **How Is Mentoring a Returning Citizen Different?**

Mentoring a Returning Citizen is different from nearly all other courses you might take on the subject because it is written by ordinary people who are serving as mentors themselves. It's not written by scholars and "experts" applying what they know from research and experiments connected with some scientific study. Nor is it a study mass-produced for training in an institution. It's put together by real people with real skills, relating them in a realistic manner. The skills you're learning for mentoring are skills you can use in your everyday life as well. You may not be mentoring every waking hour, but the skills and knowledge you gain in this course are skills and knowledge you can use anytime!

Those who use this course can be flexible. You don't have to sit down with it eight hours straight. You can take it piecemeal, chapter by chapter, and think about the questions and ideas that come up along the way. You can learn concepts over a longer period of time, giving you a better opportunity to think about what you're learning as you apply it in everyday life. If you have questions in the beginning about whether or not you can do this, by the end you have answers and the confidence that you can, or the insight to realize another form of ministry may suit you better..

The training in the course intentionally does not follow the same sequence of events that you would see in a mentee's life upon being released from prison. We don't start you on intake training, followed by training for your first meeting, then your second meeting, and so on. We give you tools you'll need first, and then we teach you how to use them as you start meeting with your mentee.

It's like learning to drive a car: you don't just throw the keys at someone and tell them to hit the highway. First you teach them about the rules of the road, obeying traffic signs, and the traffic conditions they'll face along the way because they're going to encounter them all at the same time once they start operating the vehicle.

The training of this course is aimed at people who learn in different ways. Video accompanies the workbook for those who learn visually and aurally. The workbook text is written for those who learn systematically and benefit from step-by-step instruction. The exercises are built to accommodate those who learn experientially, including some role-playing and interviewing activities for those who learn by doing. There is plenty of opportunity to write down what you're learning, and for taking notes if you learn best by writing.

The course is unique in that it humanizes returning citizens so you recognize them as being people just like us. Contrary to what some may believe, Christians aren't perfect in this world of sin, and neither are their families. Mom may suffer from depression, Uncle Bob may have an alcohol problem, and cousin Jim may have been in rehab for drug abuse. In fact, Uncle Bob may even have been incarcerated after he drove drunk and killed a family. You may even know why Uncle Bob was drinking in the first place. He made a series of poor decisions; he wasn't a premeditated murderer or a violent person. But he had problems and needed Jesus.

Those returning to society after being incarcerated have similar difficulties and come from similar families. They're depressed, anxious, victims of their own poor choices, and sinners who need Jesus. In bringing this to mind, Mentoring Returning Citizens humanizes those we're trying to help and serve. In this way it's helpful to both the mentor and the mentee they're trying to reach.



### Real People

Those who come out of prison and jail may look intimidating on the outside, and they may even act that way when they're together in a group. But when you get them one-on-one and they feel comfortable enough to open up to you, you see they're just ordinary human beings. One mentor relays how he prayed, "Lord, give me the right words to say," as he faced a mentee who looked frightening and calloused on the outside. But that mentor also relayed how moved he was to hear that mentee break down in tears and confess, "I needed to hear I was wrong in what I was doing, and I needed the forgiveness I received in Jesus."

Through this course you will learn how to listen in order to gather the puzzle pieces relating to your mentee, and you will learn how to fit them together so that you can understand why your mentee behaved the way they did, and what you can do with God's help to enable them to change as they move ahead in their journey.

You'll learn how to bridge the gaps with a mentee who may seem quite different from you and to see how much alike you are. In fact, as you sit across from or next to your mentee, there are times it will seem you're looking into a mirror. The struggles your mentee has are ones you've probably had too at one time or another. Where did you go for help and hope in the midst of that struggle? No doubt it was your Savior and his open arms of love. That is where you will direct your mentee in the midst of his struggles too!

Yes, there will be problems, struggles, and addictions your mentees have which you don't understand. But that's the beauty of it: you can call on them to help you to understand so that you can help. The cycle of temptation and sin is the same for all of us. The individual temptations and sins may be different, but the cycle is the same.

Realistically, there is no temptation or sin to which we are immune. Any of us are capable of being pulled in by different temptations and pushed down deeper and deeper in the cycle of sin. It's shocking to think about that, but important to realize that when we're helping someone who has been pulled in by temptation and pushed down into particular sins. They are not unreachable or beyond help. It's not a caged animal who is sitting across from you; it's a human being much like you!

### What Will You Get with Mentoring a Returning Citizen?

As you picture yourself in the role of mentoring a returning citizen, you are likely to have concerns and reservations about what you're about to do. That's natural because it's likely a new experience for you. And the concerns and reservations

you may have are likely the same ones experienced by others who have embarked on the same journey.

**What are your biggest concerns or worries?**

- ✓ "I'm afraid of talking to somebody who's just gotten out of prison or jail."
- ✓ "I'm concerned because I've never dealt with someone that has the addictions and past experiences of the person I'm supposed to be helping."
- ✓ "I'm concerned that if I push my mentee too hard, I may cause even more discouragement and depression."
- ✓ "I'm afraid I won't know when I should address an issue head-on and when to let an issue ride for a while."
- ✓ "I'm concerned because I'm not certified to do this, and I don't have a degree as a counselor or psychologist."
- ✓ "I'm afraid without the proper resources, I won't be able to help my mentee."
- ✓ "I'm afraid of making a mistake or saying the wrong thing."
- ✓ "I'm afraid of my mentee failing and not achieving his goals."
- ✓ "I'm concerned about my safety and the safety of my family."
- ✓ "I'm concerned about the time commitment this will involve and that it may negatively affect my family and others in my life."

**What are the biggest challenges you have with those areas?**

- ✓ "How do I trust Jesus to give me the words to say even in new or uncomfortable situations?"
- ✓ "I don't know how to deal with some of the specific things my mentee is dealing with, like drug and alcohol abuse, and sexual offenses."
- ✓ "I'm not sure how hard to push my mentee to keep him or her on track."



- ✓ "I know I will need to confront sin, but at the same time, I will need to be patient with my mentee. How will I know when to just let the Holy Spirit work in the mentee's heart?"
- ✓ "I don't know the qualifications needed to do what I'm expected to do."
- ✓ "Where do I find the appropriate resources in the community to help my mentee?"
- ✓ "I need to learn what to say and do, and how to recover when what I said or did was not helpful."
- ✓ "If my mentee fails, how do I give that to Jesus and put it behind me?"
- ✓ "If I work with someone having a criminal background, can I adequately manage the risk to my family and myself?"
- ✓ Can I manage my time overall so that mentoring does not negatively impact my life and my relationships with those I love?"

### **What are the problems they are causing?**

All of the above questions and concerns could, no doubt, be causing you to doubt whether the mentoring role and this course are really right for you. They're causing you to wonder whether your own skills, qualifications, and abilities are sufficient to help someone rejoin society after having been incarcerated. It's good to evaluate these problems and to find answers to the questions and concerns you have. It's part of "counting the cost" and making an honest evaluation of whether this is right for you. It's good to get the questions and reservations on the table.

This mentoring course is designed to address those very concerns and reservations. The reason the course exists is to anticipate the difficulties you may have and to address them before you "dive in" to the mentoring work.

This course will assure you that the person you're mentoring, though perhaps very different from you, is also like you in many ways. They are exactly that: a person, sinful and redeemed by the blood of Christ. Whether you wonder what to say in certain situations or worry whether or not you've said the right thing, this course will offer you guidance in exactly that. And it will point you to your Lord, his Word, and his Holy Spirit who promises to guide you and give you what to say.

The course will inform you about addictions and how those oppressed by them think. It will also offer you guidance as to where to go for more specific information about the addictions and problems your mentee may be dealing with. It will coach you on when to press issues and what to do if your mentee becomes

discouraged or depressed. The chapters that follow will give you guidance in how to be patient with your mentee and to allow the Holy Spirit to work in their heart on his own timetable. It will give you confidence in what you're doing, even though you won't be certified or have a degree to hang on your wall. The course will show you how to be a friend, how to care, and how to love as Christ loved. And as a Christian, you already have those qualifications.

If your mentee slips backward or fails, you may think it's a reflection on you, but it's not. Harsh as it may seem, it's really on them. And you will be there to help them realize that. It may be the most valuable lesson they learn!

As for your own safety and that of your family, be smart and trust in your Lord's guidance and protection. Don't divulge personal and private information about yourself or your family. Be wise in where you meet, when you meet, and how you meet. Don't put yourself in situations where there can be issues. You learn how to mitigate that risk.

If you're concerned about the time involved, set limits for yourself. Be available but be prudent in how you budget your time. It doesn't take as much time as you may think. And much depends on how much time you want to put into it. Every mentee will be different and require a different allotment of time for different needs. That is one thing that makes mentoring challenging, but also exciting!

### **What's your ideal outcome?**

Ideally, the course will instruct and enlighten you in how to help a person who has been incarcerated return to a normal life in society. It will teach you how to help them deal with addictions and other self-destructive problems they may have. It will help you help them understand the cycle of sin in their life, and the importance of regularly fleeing with that sin to the Savior and his forgiveness. You will not only see the potential in a hurting individual, but you'll be able to help that individual achieve that potential with God's help. In short, you will learn techniques that will help you help your mentee.

You'll learn how to "break the ice" with an individual who has a background quite different from your own. You'll learn how to build and maintain a relationship with someone who's struggling with an addiction or a criminal history. Supporting an ex-offender while holding them accountable for results can be scary. But the course will teach you to do both with competency and to feel comfortable as you do.

### What would getting that outcome do for you?

Your mentee will certainly benefit from what you learn in this course and the way you apply it to their life. But you will benefit too. You will learn how to build bridges with those who have a life experience different from your own. You will learn how to engage someone like that in conversation and how to build and maintain a relationship with them. You will also grow in an understanding of your own sin, your walk with the Savior, and the warmth of his love and forgiveness. You will learn how to set goals for yourself and to get past the obstacles that prevent you from achieving them.



### By the End of This Program, You Will Be Able To . . .

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- ✓ Learn About the Mentee in a General Way
- ✓ Converse and Listen
- ✓ Build a Relationship with the Mentee, Yourself, and God
- ✓ Build an Action Plan You Both Agree On
- ✓ Run a Meeting with a Mentee
- ✓ Hold the Mentee and Mentor Relationship Accountable
- ✓ Assess Your Readiness Fit for This Type of Ministry

## How Do You Guide Those Freed to a Better Life in Christ?

Take notes on your thoughts to share with the group. Record additional ideas during the presentation.

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## The Program

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This program dives deep into guiding those freed to a better life in Christ.

That lofty goal assumes that a few things are true about you. First, it assumes that you are alive in Christ, that is, you believe in Jesus' saving work for you and for everyone else in the world. It presupposes that you realize that the good news of forgiveness in the Savior is a powerful message through which the Holy Spirit works to change lives. It presupposes you know that power in the Savior's love.

Secondly, the lofty goal of guiding those freed to a better life in Christ assumes that it is your desire to help those who have been freed from jail or prison not only to a better life in this world, but a better life in Christ now and after this life is over. Hopefully each mentee you work with will be better off when you're done working with them than when you first began. Hopefully you will see progress as they overcome the grip of addiction, as they move to better jobs and more fulfilling relationships with those around them.

But your goal is to lead them to this better life IN CHRIST. Above all, you want them to grow in faith and in their understanding of God's love for them, the only true and lasting motivation for all of the above. What happens if they struggle with the addiction the rest of their life, as many will do? What happens if even more relationships end in brokenness? What happens if they reoffend and become incarcerated again? If they still have Christ, they still have the hope of a new beginning. They still have his love and forgiveness for their failures and waywardness. In clinging to Christ to the end, they still have eternal life—and final freedom from all sin, struggles, brokenness, and failure.

In guiding your mentees to a better life in Christ, another important goal lies in the background. The goal is that your mentee will come to a point in their life in Christ that they will be able to mentor others who have been freed from incarceration so that the cycle can continue. What better mentor could there be than one who has "been there," who has experienced the setbacks and struggles and, with God's help, has overcome them? That is the real beauty of what you're doing in this program: you're multiplying Christ's love and healing with every mentee you work with!

Make a clear picture in your mind of what you want to get out of this program. Even though you don't know exactly what you're going to learn, you have an idea of what you came here to get. Take a minute right now, and think about why you're listening to us—what led you to this point—and make a mental picture of exactly what you want to get out of this program.

### The Top-Three List

Take two minutes and write down the top three things you want to get out of this program. Put a star next to the one that is THE most important to you.

1.

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2.

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3.

The first part of this program is about you. We're going to talk about a lot of things that will make you think and will challenge your assumptions and current paradigm. You might be thinking, "How are they going to help mentor a returning citizen?" That's good. That's exactly where you're supposed to be.

In our typical style, we're going to paint a lot of broad strokes to begin and then wrap up with some hard-hitting, ultra-useful insight for you to take and use. Will you make a commitment to stay with us?

- Take notes during and after this presentation. It will be harder, but you will get more out of it. (Imagine learning to ride a bike without actually taking the training wheels off and doing it yourself . . . the notes will provide you with a means to achieve that.)
- Review this program a minimum of once per week for three months, so you HEAR it all.
- Work with the material and activities at least one hour per week for fourteen weeks in a row to build a solid habit.
- Make a personal commitment to get the most from your investment. You spent time, and you deserve to get back as much as you can for it.

## Lesson 1: Learn About the Mentee in a General Way



### Gain the Tools You Need to Empathize with the Mentee More Effectively and Efficiently

People get involved with prison ministry or mentoring for a couple of reasons. Oftentimes a family member has been in prison, so they want to help others with their struggle. Or they are mission-minded and see an opportunity to share the gospel.

When you know more about the person getting out of prison, you have more tools in your tool box to help them. When issues come up, you can adjust your approach faster to better help them.

The better you know the mentee, the more real needs you can identify, versus the surface problems they present. Some problems they might present are not having enough money or being unable to pay their bills. The real issue isn't that they don't have enough money or can't pay the bills; it's that they don't know how to budget the money they do have, or they don't know where to go to get assistance.

Or they do know where to go but are not willing to go through the effort to go there.



### **Face Value Versus Real Needs**

You can't always take the mentee's word at face value. The better you get to know the mentee, the easier it is to identify the real needs they have.

Knowing the mentee as a real person with real needs is vital. So often our views of people in prison are distorted by stereotypical pictures we get of them on television or in the media: "They're all drug dealers; they're all murderers; they're all rapists." The thought of helping someone like that is frightening at worst, or overwhelming at best.

If we really get to know the person we're mentoring as an individual, we will realize that they're a lot like we are, and a lot like the others in our own Christian congregation. Among us are alcoholics, those with addictions to gambling or pornography, and those who have issues with anxiety. It's the same with those we are mentoring. Those who have been in jail or in prison are not subhuman or a worse class of people than others. They're genuine people with real needs just like the rest of us.

As real people with genuine needs, they share the greatest need we all have: the need for a Savior from sin. The more we reflect on that person's needs and their need for a Savior, the more it points back to our need for that very same Savior. When we realize that, we're not only showing empathy toward the person sitting in front of us; we're also showing humility.



### **You Can't Fix Another Person**

Always remember that you are not superior to the person who just got out of prison or jail and that you are not there to "fix" them. It's better to see it as helping a friend who is struggling with something. You need to get to know the person well enough so you can find out the real problem in order to help.

It may appear that a mentee who is angry all the time needs help with anger management. Getting to know the person and listening to their struggles may, however, reveal the real problem is that they're not getting along with their spouse. Helping with anger management may be of some benefit, but it won't get to the real problem. Dealing with the spousal issues is what your mentee really needs help with. You won't be able to do this unless you get to know your mentee in a general way.





### How to Learn About the Mentee in a General Way:

1. KNOW THEIR BACKGROUND
2. KNOW THE POPULATION OF THE PERSON
3. IDENTIFY THEIR NEED

### Know Their Background

Getting to know mentees well will mean knowing and understanding their background. It's also important to understand why your mentee has the background they have. For example, suppose your mentee is a sexual offender. Chances are very good that this sexual offender—perhaps even a “child molester”—was a victim of sexual abuse as a child. To make matters even more complex, that could explain why they may also struggle with alcohol abuse or anger management. Many types of trauma in your mentee’s background can help explain issues they are struggling with.



### Cut to the Root

It's vital to get to the bottom of why the mentee is where they are at this point in their life. Their crimes, addictions, and struggles may be symptoms of abuse, hurt, and shame inflicted on them long ago. It's necessary to identify these so that, through God's Word, you can lead the mentee to God-pleasing ways of dealing with them, rather than coping mechanisms that are self-destructive.

### Learn About Their Family

A great deal of that background includes their family of origin. Statistics may be helpful here: 51% of inmates were raised in a single-parent home, and usually that parent was the mother. More alarming is the fact that 95% of male inmates have not had a loving father-figure in their lives. In addition, 46% of jail inmates have had a close relative in jail.

This means that these inmates or their family members aren't looking forward to going to college or attaining high career goals. It also means that a child will be lacking responsible role models. If they've been raised by a mother with a revolving door of guys in her life and they have a number of brothers from different dads, all of whom are self-centered and constantly in and out of jail, what lessons of maturity will they learn?

On top of this, 20% of inmates had a parent who abused alcohol, and 18% reported being physically or sexually abused as a child. (That's only the ones who reported such abuse. Knowing that in general 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men have been abused, the number could be much higher.) The fact that these kinds of family dysfunctions are often generational can help you understand your mentee. Finding out about your mentee's family background will help you understand him.

### **Learn about Their Prison Background**

The same is true about understanding mentees' background in prison. How long have they been in prison? Has it been ten years or longer? Think of how much technology has changed in that time. That's going to affect how they go about applying for a job or seeking help with social programs. Are you aware that 80% of inmates have used drugs, but only 13% have received any form of treatment for drug abuse? Knowing if this is still a part of your mentee's lifestyle will help you help them.

The mentality inmates develop to survive in prison is also part of their background. Most live fearful existences but put up a strong front. You do what you have to do to stay alive. For example, many will have homosexual sex, but they'll tell you they're not homosexual. Why? Because they're doing what they have to do to get by. It's similar to life in gangs, where a different set of rules apply in prison that wouldn't work in our society. Prison mentality is very short-term—do what you have to in order to survive today.



#### **One Day At a Time**

Taking life one day at a time can be a good thing. But for a person coming from a background in prison, it can be a harmful mentality. When prisoners are conditioned to do what they need to do to survive day by day, that thinking will prevail as they attempt to survive on the outside. It may be difficult for them to set goals, keep appointments, and plan ahead.

### **Learn about Their Religious Background**

Mentors will also want to take the religious background of their mentees into consideration. Many older prisoners went to church and Sunday school when they were younger, but "didn't get it." That is, it didn't mean anything to them, so later on they did their own thing rather than what they had been taught. But at least they are somewhat familiar with some Bible stories and a few Bible characters. Get to know your mentee's religious background so you can meet them on their level.

The same thing is needed for mentees who are in their twenties or younger. More of them have not heard any Bible stories, nor are they familiar with any Bible

characters or truths. You're starting at ground zero with them because they have no background at all. It's challenging, but it can be done.



### Four Things You Need to Know about the Mentee:

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | UNDERSTAND THEIR FAMILY OF ORIGIN.               |
| 2. | BE AWARE OF THEIR INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES.     |
| 3. | DISCOVER THEIR RELIGIOUS TRAINING OR LACK OF IT. |
| 4. | FIND OUT WHAT LIES BEHIND THEIR BACKGROUND.      |



### Activity: Know Their Background

It's your turn to discover your mentee's background.

**Step One:** When you ask your mentee about their family growing up, they respond, "My family was really messed up. Most people had no idea what was really going on in that house." Create a potential dialogue between you and your mentee in which you try to draw them out on their family background.

**Step Two:** Describe to a fellow mentor what difference religious background makes in understanding a mentee.

**Step Three:** On a blank sheet of paper, draw a tree with roots beneath a soil line, and trunk and branches above. On the branches, write in various problems and struggles your mentee may have as they leave prison. On the roots, write in things from your mentee's background that may cause what is "growing" on the branches.

## Know the Population of this Person

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We have all been parts of various populations at different phases in our lives. At one time we were part of a school population. At another time we may have been part of a dormitory population or an apartment building population. We're all part of a town, city, state, or national population, governed by those laws that apply, and affected by what is going on around us within that population.

### Understand the Prison Mentality

A similar thing is true of those who have been part of a jail or prison population. Prisoners' lives are completely structured for them for the entire time they're in prison. You get up at 5:00 for coffee. At 5:30 it's breakfast time. Then you go into your court stuff until it's lunch time at 12:00. At 5:00 p.m. it's dinner. The only drinks are coffee, water, or Kool-Aid, unless you buy something else from the commissary. You have access to an hour outside a day if it works into the facility's schedule. There may be T.V. and a place to physically work out, but most of your time is spent in a 10 foot by 12 foot cell.

What effects does all of this have on mentees and their mindset when they get out of prison? A number of things are true:

- 1) They are indecisive because every decision has been made for them.
- 2) They are distrustful because everyone they've dealt with was out to get them. Everyone has been looking out for themselves. If they could use personal information against you to get ahead somehow, they would do it.
- 3) They are afraid of freedom. If a person has been in prison for ten years, every day they've been told when they're having breakfast and what they will have for breakfast. Friday was always cinnamon roll day—they could count on that. Then suddenly they're free. Now they have to take care of themselves. They have to decide what to have for breakfast, where to get it, and how to make it. And what about cinnamon rolls? Freedom is frightening.
- 4) They are out of touch with family, society, and today's requirements to earn a living. They didn't have to earn a living because everything was provided for them. In the time they were incarcerated, technology changed, the job market changed, and society changed.
- 5) They are lacking knowledge of day to day responsibility. They didn't need to take that responsibility in prison, so they don't know how to do it when they get out.



### In What Five Areas Will Mentees Need Help with Their Prison Mindset?

1. THEY WILL NEED HELP MAKING DECISIONS.
2. THEY WILL HAVE TO LEARN TO TRUST PEOPLE.
3. THEY WILL HAVE TO STRUCTURE THEIR OWN LIFE.
4. THEY WILL HAVE TO RECONNECT WITH FAMILY AND SOCIETY.
5. THEY WILL NEED TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES.

For all these reasons, the tendency for mentees is toward recidivism, that is, to backslide and reoffend. They do what they know. They hang out with those who they know, even if their influence is bad. They may sound like they're making progress in avoiding alcohol or drug abuse, looking for a job, or finding a place to stay, but knowing what tends to be true about the prison population and the prison mentality, they are likely struggling.



#### Social Cues

Mentees will often use what are termed "social cues" when they speak with their mentor and answer questions. Social cues are verbal or non-verbal forms of communication which, when read properly, can reveal much about mentees which they are not expressing directly. Looking away, a certain smile, or general phrases which gloss over truth can all be social cues that help mentors "read between the lines" of what mentees are saying.

#### Timing Is Critical

Finding out how long the mentee has been out of prison is paramount. The first 72 hours are very critical, because the mentee is under a high level of stress. They have to find a place to stay, and they have to find a job. The court has told them what they need to do in order to stay out on parole and not end up back in prison, but it isn't easy. This makes meeting mentees during those first 72 hours critical.

The next big hurdle comes after they're out of jail or prison for two weeks. Most offenders who reoffend and go back to prison do so within those first two weeks.

They're supposed to get their life together all on their own and stay straight when they don't know anybody except their drug and alcohol-using friends. It's overwhelming. But they know you as their mentor, and you are in a position to help. You are understanding the population they are coming from.



### **You Have a Big Savior!**

When your mentee is overwhelmed by the road ahead, you will certainly remind them of the fact that their Savior, Jesus, is bigger than any obstacle they have to face. But this is also an important truth for YOU to remember.

Truly understanding the background and population of your mentee and that their problems and hurts run deeper than you ever imagined can be overwhelming for you. But YOUR Savior Jesus is bigger and more powerful than you and the dilemma you face. With the same love that led him to the cross and out of the tomb, he will guide you and your mentee.



### **Top Three Post-Prison Challenges**

1. MENTEES WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME CREATING STRUCTURE IN THEIR LIVES.
2. MENTEES WILL TEND TO GO BACK TO PATTERNS AND PEOPLE THEY KNOW
3. MENTEES WILL TEND TO REOFFEND WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF RELEASE



## Activity: Know the Population of This Person

It's your turn to test your knowledge of the prison population.

**Step One:** Since things are structured in prison and most decisions are made for inmates, list five things mentees now need to do which they didn't need to do in prison.

**Step Two:** Write down five phrases mentees might use to couch or downplay the fact that they've been backsliding in addictions, job hunting, socializing, and the like.

**Step Three:** You have to break a date with a friend in order to meet with your mentee either within the first 72 hours of their release, or within the first two weeks of their release. Pick someone to be your "friend," and explain why it's important for you to break the date and meet with your mentee.

## Identify their Need

As mentors speak with their mentees and ask questions, the goal is to identify the needs their mentees have in order to address them and provide the help needed.

### Discover Their Practical, Personal, and Spiritual Needs

First, there are practical needs. They just got out of prison, so they need a place to stay. They're also going to have to eat, so they will need to do shopping. Before they can do that, they're going to need a job. In order to find a job, they're probably going to need transportation. For that they will need an I.D. card. For a job, they will need to fill out applications. If they've been incarcerated for a long time, they will need to familiarize themselves with applying for jobs online rather than on paper. They will need a means of communication, so that will mean obtaining a phone and learning how to use it.

Secondly, there are personal needs. These will surface as mentors get to know their mentees by talking to them and learning more about their background. Such needs include their personal struggles with alcohol, drugs, sexual addiction, or mental illness. It could be learning to manage their anger or figuring out how to budget their time or their money. Discovering the needs that are unique to your mentee is vital to empathizing with your mentee and providing the unique help they need.

Finally, overarching all needs are the spiritual ones. At the heart of all problems, all struggles, and all offenses is sin and separation from God. The answer to sin is the Savior God provided in the person of Jesus Christ. As mentors get to know their mentees better, they will be able to sift through problems and struggles to identify specific sins. Then they will be able to apply the good news of

forgiveness in Jesus to those specific sins. Identifying this need is central to motivating and encouraging positive change and spiritual growth.



### Three Kinds of Needs Mentees Have:

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | PRACTICAL NEEDS.                                 |
| 2. | PERSONAL NEEDS.                                  |
| 3. | SPIRITUAL NEEDS INCLUDING THE NEED FOR A SAVIOR. |



### Activity: Identify Their Need

It's your turn to identify the needs of mentees.

Step One: Your mentee needs a job, an I.D. card, and a phone. What do you do, and in what order do you do it?

Step Two: Your mentee struggles with angry outbursts directed toward others. They drink because it seems they hate themselves. What questions might you ask to identify their deeper needs?

Step Three: The deepest needs anyone has are spiritual. Without preaching, share with your mentee how Jesus has address your greatest needs.





## Your Turn to Learn About the Mentee in a General Way

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### Review and Exercises

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

### Know Their Background

- When you ask your mentee about their family growing up, they respond, "My family was really messed up. Most people had no idea what was really going on in that house." Create a potential dialogue between you and your mentee in which you try to draw them out on their family background.
- Describe to a fellow mentor what difference religious background makes in understanding a mentee.
- On a blank sheet of paper, draw a tree with roots beneath a soil line, and trunk and branches above. On the branches, write in various problems and struggles your mentee may have as they leave prison. On the roots, write in things from your mentee's background that may cause what is "growing" on the branches.

### Know the Population of This Person

- Since things are structured in prison and most decisions are made for inmates, list five things mentees now need to do which they didn't need to do in prison.
- Write down five phrases mentees might use to couch or downplay the fact that they've been backsliding in addictions, job hunting, socializing, and the like.
- You have to break a date with a friend in order to meet with your mentee either within the first 72 hours of their release, or within the first two weeks of their release. Pick someone to be your "friend," and explain why it's important for you to break the date and meet with your mentee.

### Identify Their Need

- Your mentee needs a job, an I.D. card, and a phone. What do you do, and in what order do you do it?
- Your mentee struggles with angry outbursts directed toward others. They drink because it seems they hate themselves. What questions might you ask to identify their deeper needs?
- The deepest needs anyone has are spiritual. Without preaching, share with your mentee how Jesus has addressed your greatest needs.

## Lesson 2: Converse and Listen



### Learn to Read...People!

You want to help mentees you're introduced to with the various struggles and difficulties they're having as they pick up their lives and integrate into society. How do you know what struggles and difficulties they have? How do you find out the point they're at in their life now and move them on to where they want to be, and, ultimately, where God wants them to be? It comes by conversing with and listening to the mentee.

There are skills connected with conversation and listening. Your goal is to develop your "superpower" of reading people and, thus, become a more successful mentor. A very large amount of what you will learn from the mentee, especially up-front, is in the things that are not spoken. Knowing what's NOT being said is important because if someone is not freely giving you answers (or truthful answers), it's going to take you a lot more time in the long run to find out their real needs and actually provide them meaningful help. You will be able to develop a better strategy or plan in working with them. Skillfully speaking with and listening to mentees will help you understand and meet their needs better.



### **The Difference Between Conversing and Listening**

Conversing is the actual dialogue between you and your mentee, usually face-to-face. Listening is carefully paying attention to words along with verbal and non-verbal cues to better understand your mentee.

If you get better at asking the right questions and understanding what the responses mean—like what it means if they pause too long or they are not sure of the answer—you do a quick follow-up and drill in deeper because you know there's something else there. Or they're biting their tongue and you know they have more to say, so you learn to push the issue further until you pull out the rest.

If you don't have any of these skills, you may become frustrated as a mentor because you won't feel like you're getting anywhere; it will seem like you hit a brick wall. If you don't have good conversation and listening skills, you may have something pulled over on you by a mentee who feeds you a story which you will buy, but you'll be completely wrong. That's a huge waste of time for you as a mentor.

It's also a waste of time for the mentee. The mentee may end up being frustrated that you didn't understand them. They may conclude that there's no value in this process, so they don't want to continue.

Getting good information from your mentee is worth a great deal more than the best of junk information. After all, you're using this information to build out your action plan, to determine how you will interact with them in the future, and to help them develop as a person and move forward in their life. Skillfully conversing and listening is the prerequisite to everything else you will be doing as a mentor. Through good conversing and listening, you get to understand what mentees need, and you get to have it become the mentees' idea to take the steps they need to make in order to be successful.



### **How to Converse and Listen:**

1. OBSERVE THE PERSON
2. ASK THE RIGHT TYPE OF QUESTIONS
3. LISTEN TO THE RESPONSES OF THE PERSON

## Observe the Person

Some folks are people watchers. They like studying the mannerisms and habits of others, and sometimes develop little theories about them: she's probably a wife and mother returning from a hard day's work at a restaurant; he's probably a successful businessman who goes home to an empty house.

Observing a mentee isn't too much different from that. It's using all of your senses (except taste perhaps; licking people is frowned upon!) to learn about someone, even before deeper conversation begins. Sight, hearing, smell, and even touch all have background information to provide to you. You want to take it all in. Yes, even from touch: perhaps a handshake at first, or maybe even a hug later on. They all have something to say.

## Observe Their Appearance and Tone

Generally, the first thing you notice about someone is how they appear, that is, what can you see with your eyes. Do they look physically healthy, or are they barely dragging themselves in, looking like they haven't gotten a good night's sleep in three days? Are their eyes bloodshot? You also can learn a lot about a person from what they're wearing, for example. Do certain articles of clothing indicate they may be in a gang? Does an unkempt appearance indicate they may not have a decent place to live? Is there some information that might be gathered from the types of tattoos they have? Is it possible they were—or still are—in a gang of some kind?

Tone is another indicator of where in life the person standing in front of you may happen to be. Is the tone of their voice loud, soft, slow, or jittery? Does their voice indicate they are pumped up or excited? Tone could indicate something even more obvious, like slurred speech. The person could be high or intoxicated.

It's not that you have a checklist in front of you on a sheet of paper for various tones and what they mean. But you're constantly taking mental notes. Their tone may indicate how you're going to work with them today. If they're in a chipper mood and light on their feet, you're going to deal with them differently than if slouching or depressed. You want to meet them in the mood and frame of mind they are in.



### Why Is Tone Important?

The tone of a mentee's voice often indicates where in the room you will position yourself to better converse and connect with them. One tone may indicate you should sit between them and the door, another tone may indicate you should put something between them and you, and a different tone may cause you to be positioned across from them. Still another tone may indicate you'll do well to sit next to them so you can console them.

Look for changes in the mentee's tone in the course of a visit. If they come in happy and joking, but in the course of the conversation they become louder and more forceful, jittery or angry, what in the conversation may have brought about that change? Perhaps you can guide them between the two extremes so you can keep diving for information on what's aggravating them. But push too hard, and they may chicken out and not tell you what you need to know. You need to know what's aggravating them, because that's likely your key issue for the day.

In reading and meeting their tone, you will want to keep the mentee calm. If they're angry, they may not think clearly or act rationally. If you go right to the "hot spot," you may push them away. If you get there calmly, they may open up about it. Typically, the "hot spots" are the things they're struggling with the most, and that's what you want to alleviate.

### **Observe Their Body Language**

You can learn a great deal about a person from the body language they use. For example, if a mentee's eyes are darting around, they're constantly looking over their shoulder, and they seem inattentive, it could mean a lot of things: they might be nervous about something, or high, or fearful that someone's going to jump up behind them with a gun and shoot them. You may not get the whole picture, but you will get pieces of it—enough to know they're not comfortable.

There are some general things to look for in how people hold themselves. Are they agitated or relaxed? Are they open and receptive, or are they closed and shut-down? Someone who is agitated may pace around the room or nervously tap their foot. Someone relaxed may sit back in a chair, or casually cross their feet or fling an arm over the back of a chair. Someone who is closed and shut-down may sit with their head down, arms crossed, and jaw clenched.

There can also be combinations of these stances. A person may be agitated, but open to conversation, or agitated and not willing to talk about an issue. Or a person may be relaxed, but closed and unwilling to communicate, or relaxed and open to communicate.

All of this body language is telling you how to approach the mentee and what kind of questions to ask. In general, you want to match their body language. If they're relaxed, you can kick back and relax with them. But if they're agitated and pacing around the room and you're relaxed and calm, you may be communicating the nonverbal message that you don't care.



### Match the Mood of the Mentee

Your body language should, in a general way, match that of the mentee. If they are open, be open. If they are agitated, show your concern by how you carry yourself. Not only is the mentee's body language communicating cues to you; yours is communicating cues to the mentee. The mood of the mentee is your "thermometer" to determine whether they're hot or cold as far as their disposition is concerned. In general, you want to meet them at "warm" for the best communication.

### Observe Their Smell

It's almost embarrassing to talk about another person's smell, but we have to admit it's often noticeable. The scent of body wash or soap may indicate good hygiene as much as various body odors may indicate a lack of it. Smell is also something to observe with mentees.

A bad body odor may indicate more than a mentee's poor hygiene. It could mean they're not taking care of themselves physically, or they do not have the facilities in which to do so. Where are they staying? The smell of alcohol has obvious implications. Too much cologne may mean they're trying to cover up any of the above, or that they simply don't know how to use cologne properly.

As with observing appearance, tone of voice, and body language, observing the smell of mentees will not tell you the whole story about what's going on in their lives. But it will give you clues—pieces of the puzzle. And the more pieces of the puzzle you have, the more you'll learn about your mentee, and the better you'll be able to address their needs.



### What Observations Will Help You Discover and Meet Mentees' Needs?

- |    |                                    |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 1. | OBSERVE THEIR APPEARANCE AND TONE. |
| 2. | OBSERVE THEIR BODY LANGUAGE.       |
| 3. | OBSERVE THEIR SMELL.               |



## Activity: Observe the Person

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It's your turn to observe the person.

**Step One:** Initiate a conversation with a friend, classmate, or family member. After the conversation, on a sheet of paper, in one column write down what you observed about their appearance and their tone of voice. In an adjoining column, indicate what the things you observed could mean about the person you interviewed (i.e., they were irritated about being interviewed, they just got out of bed, they were in a hurry, etc.).

**Step Two:** Turn on a television show. Watch it for five or ten minutes. Pick out a person you see on the screen and write a description of their body language. (Yes, it could be a basketball player, football player, or someone being interviewed on a talk show. Someone in a sitcom or drama might be better.) After your description, write down what this body language may mean about the character or person you observed. Remember to look for open versus closed body language, and anxious versus relaxed body language.

**Step Three:** Try to position yourself in a crowded place (sidewalk, concert, bus, waiting area of an office or restaurant). Note the smells you observe of the people who surround you or whom you pass by. What might these smells indicate about the person?

## Ask the Right Type of Questions

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After your observation using your five senses, you will want to work on the conversation. Again, your purpose is to gather information so you can provide the help and guidance your mentee needs. In order to discover what that is, the main tools in your toolbox you will use will be questions.

Not just any questions. Yes, conversations can start with all kinds of chit-chat and small talk that breaks the ice. But sooner rather than later you're going to want to get down to finding information that matters. Imagine a talk show host asking questions to a guest only to have them answered with a blank stare or audible silence. You don't want that response after the questions you ask your mentee.

Therefore, it's important to ask the right kind of questions. Sometimes you want the whole story. You want the mentee to open up and reveal their struggles, their hurts, their victories, and their fears. You get lots of information from which you derive juicy bits of knowledge you can use later on. Other times you want a very direct answer—a simple "yes" or "no." A question like, "did you get drunk last night?" does not require a long, detailed explanation. In fact, such details may be



disguising and soft-pedaling the truth. It's important to know which question to ask when. It's knowing how to ask the RIGHT questions.

### **Ask an Open-Ended Question**

An open-ended question is exactly what the name implies: a question that does not have an anticipated right or wrong answer. It's the opposite of a question that requires a one word or a yes or no answer. You want them talking. An open-ended question leads to a "story" answer.

How can this be important? Suppose you ask your mentee how their weekend was, just to make sure they didn't get into any trouble. In answering, they bring up the fact that their sister—whom you never heard of before—just moved to town. You have just been presented with a whole family dynamic you didn't know existed. And that dynamic is a good thing to know, because having a support system for the mentee is huge. Knowing whether or not this sister could be part of that support system is an important piece of information.

Of course, sometimes mentees can answer open-ended questions with a short answer. It may not be "yes" or "no," but they're revealing only the bare minimum. This can be a sign that they're still on their guard and their walls are still up. When you ask a question expecting a five word answer, and they go on talking for two minutes, it's a sign that either they're comfortable and they're opening up to you, or they're really good at telling long-winded lies.



#### **Listening for Lies**

Lying in answer to questions is certainly something to listen for. When they tell the story differently each time or details don't match up, it could be a lie. A mentee could talk about being out with the guys and having a few beers, but later in the story they reveal a twelve pack was gone. They could be misspeaking, or they could be lying.

So what do you do with the information learned after asking open-ended questions? If that information reveals a success on the part of your mentee, you would certainly want to commend them. Rewarding success encourages them to repeat it. Sometimes the information you gain will reveal that they're getting close to crossing a line they shouldn't be crossing. They're leaning in the wrong direction, so you want to curb what they're in danger of doing so they don't do it. Then again, the information you gain may indicate they've already crossed a line they shouldn't have crossed. That is something you're going to want to correct. They need an about-face because they stepped across the line and went too far. They need to come back into compliance.

Another important thing you can do with the information you gain from the answer to an open-ended question is to store it to use later. Perhaps your mentee brought up five issues in their answer that all need to be dealt with. You're not going to be able to handle all five at one time, so you will write down the information they have given you so you can get to discuss it in more detail later. In other cases they may have brought up a "hot button" topic which is too emotional for them to deal with right now. Make a note of it so you can deal with it later when they're calmer.



### Ask Open-Ended Questions to Learn Something You Didn't Know So You Can...

- |    |                  |
|----|------------------|
| 1. | PRAISE IT.       |
| 2. | CURB IT.         |
| 3. | CORRECT IT.      |
| 4. | USE IT LATER ON. |

### Ask Closed or Direct Questions

If you ask a child, "Did you write on the wall with crayons?," you aren't expecting a detailed description of color choice, why they debated whether or not writing on the wall was a good idea, or whether or not they hoped to be an artist when they grow up. You want to know whether or not they did the deed—something that requires only a yes or no answer.

The same thing is true when asking direct questions to mentees. There are some specific times when a question with a simple, direct answer is required. For the mentoring program, part of the agreement is that mentees remain active in their faith life. A direct question is in place: "Did you go to church this week? Did you go to Bible study?" The answer is a "yes" or a "no." There is no need for a long story. If they answer "No," and then want to explain something, that's fine. But the main thing you wanted to know was whether or not it happened. You didn't ask WHY it didn't happen. Answering that really turns it into an open-ended question.



### **Does an "Active Faith-Life" = "Going to Church"?**

In most cases, "going to church" is a sign of an "active faith life," evidence that a person is willing to grow and serve in faith with other Christians who gather at Christ's feet. However, it is important that we consider that returning citizens may struggle with Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD). This makes it difficult for them to be in social settings to nurture their faith. Nevertheless, they can still maintain an active faith through online worship and Bible study, and personal Bible reading. It is more important for the mentee's faith to grow so that at some point their discomfort is a non-issue overcome by the Holy Spirit.

Depending on what the mentee's struggle is, a pertinent direct question might be, "Did you drink (get high, look at porn) this past weekend? Each former offender who is on probation or parole has some sort of legal requirement to fulfill. They have to go to AA once a week, they need to meet with their probation officer once a week, they're not allowed to drink, they can't drive a car because their license was suspended. You want to know whether or not they're fulfilling these requirements in order to "stay on the straight and narrow."

### **Know When to Ask Those Questions**

You need to know when to ask these direct questions over the open-ended ones. You ask the open-ended questions to get an overflowing river of words that can lead anywhere; you ask the closed or direct questions when there are no-option answers with no discussion. It's "yes" or "no." Sometimes you can use the two together: "Did you go to church last weekend?" If the answer is negative, you might follow up with, "Why not?" That should bring some narrative to work with.

### **Know When to Focus on a Key Topic They Bring Up**

There are words and triggers which mentees will bring up that indicate which things are "hot spots" or key topics for them. For example, almost all mentees will suffer from some form of depression, or they have a legal obligation they're striving to keep. But one mentee's hot spot may be their ex-spouse, while another's may be their alcohol addiction. So for the latter you're listening with concern when they tell you they went to a party with the wrong people in the wrong part of town, but for the former you're more concerned that they were over at the family's house where they came into contact with their ex-spouse—their hot spot.



### What are "Hot Spots"?

"Hot spots" are struggles or obstacles they face to living a generally happy, God-fearing life. Some hot spots you will learn from your general understanding of the mentee, and others will come out later as you grow in your relationship with the mentee. Some hot spots and key topics many mentees have in common; others will be unique to the person sitting in front of you.

Some of the big hot spots are drug or alcohol abuse and addictions. The signs are going "out with the boys," staying out for the night, or anything indicating a party atmosphere. A code could even be "going fishing" if every time they go fishing they end up drinking. Other hot spots: depression, a relationship with an ex-spouse, or with parents who are down on them. It could be a distant brother or sister, a spouse, or even children. It could be work, a boss, or certain coworkers who are "hot spots" that bring a stream of negative emotion. A hot spot could be anger, anxiety, particularly social anxiety.

How might this come up in a conversation? Suppose the mentee speaks of going to the grocery store yesterday at a certain time. If you know them well enough, you may be thinking, "They have social anxiety; they don't like to be around people. Yet they went to a grocery store at a time it was likely crowded. That was likely very difficult for them.

Other hot spots to focus on when you hear them: medical conditions that flare up and down. Those could affect how the mentee is doing and why they don't look well today. Perhaps they haven't had dialysis for two days rather than that they were on a bender. Besides health concerns, there are spiritual ones. Those can be very key hot spots too.

What do you do when you discover these hot spots in the topics mentees talk about? What purpose does noticing them serve? You might say, in military language, that it's reconnaissance gathering. You're gathering intelligence to use later on so that you can help with those hot spots. With God's help and strength they can learn to overcome and flourish, and perhaps one day even mentor others with similar hot spots along the way.



## Activity: Ask the Right Type of Questions

It's your turn to ask the right type of questions.

**Step One:** From within your circle of friends, relatives and acquaintances, find two who are willing to be interviewed. Knowing what you know about that person, ask an open-ended question to each one and note information you learn which you didn't know before.

**Step Two:** What things might you deduce from the following direct questions and answers?

Did you have anything to drink last week? "No."

Did you go to church last Sunday? "No."

Did you meet with your parole officer when you were scheduled to last Tuesday? "Yes."

Did you have any contact with your ex-spouse? "Yes."

**Step Three:** With another student, roleplay a dialogue between a mentor and mentee making use of both indirect and direct questions. It is your first meeting together, so you have a lot to learn about each other. When you're done, switch roles.

## Listen to the Responses of the Person

Asking questions is like the excavator or dynamite used in mining. It's a tool to get at the treasure that lies beneath the surface. Even more important than asking the right kind of question is listening to the responses that the question elicits. If you fail to pick up on things they're saying, using them to steer the conversation in the right direction, you're not going to get mentees to where they need to be. Their life is a rollercoaster with its highs and lows, and you want to carefully use their responses to questions in order to guide them to a more level, steady existence. Careful listening will enable you to make constant adjustments and course corrections to bring them to that level ground.

## Read Between the Lines

Listening to what mentees say is most important; but sometimes equally important is what they don't say—what they're avoiding. You can tell they're doing it when they tell a story and there are things that you know are supposed to be there which are not.

For example, a mentee may talk about going to a party, but nowhere in their narrative is any mention of a beverage. It's just too obvious when they don't say a word about it. Another example might be asking a mentee how their week went. You know they were supposed to go to AA, meet with their parole officer, and attend church, but in their answer they give you every detail about their week except any of those things they were supposed to have done. You can be pretty sure the omission was intentional. Or suppose your mentee speaks about going to a family gathering, one at which you know their ex-spouse was present. Yet, they don't say a word about their ex-spouse, even though their relationship with the spouse is a "hot-spot" for them, you probably be assured that they left the spouse out for a reason.



### **Reading and Research Between Meetings**

As you become aware of a mentee's "hot spots," do your own research on those topics so that you understand them. This is especially true when it comes to depression and addictions. For example, if they struggle with alcoholism, know what commonly triggers alcoholics to drink so that you can listen for those triggers in conversations with your mentee, even if they are the very things they leave out of the dialogue. In this way you'll grow in your ability to read between the lines.

When you first meet a mentee, you're not going to know whether they're lying about things, nor will you know what all their hot spots and triggers are. You won't know if they're a social drinker, so you have to be concerned when they talk about being with friends, or if they're depressive and only drink by themselves. You will learn those things as you get to know your mentee, and so you'll learn to listen for the things they might be leaving out of the conversation. As time goes on, and their trust grows, they will be more and more straightforward with you as their mentor, and you'll have to read between the lines less often.

There will always be those hot spots which mentees try to avoid and talk around. You will want to gently push them towards those issues since they need to be addressed, even though it might send mentees through the roof. Again, your goal will be to get them from "hot" to "warm" on the thermometer so that they can address the issue rationally. Having pleasant conversation without listening for and addressing the hot spots will not help mentees with those vital struggles in their lives.

### **Listen without Formulating the Answer**

One of the greatest pitfalls to active listening is anticipating what you're going to say next before the individual you're supposedly listening to is done speaking. If a mentee is telling you about an experience they had in attending a ball game, and you're daydreaming about your favorite team, you're going to miss half of what they say. The last few words they say could be the most important. If they ask you, "Do you like red or blue," and you answer by talking about your favorite sports team, it will be obvious to them you weren't listening. The same is true if you cut off their response before they've finished speaking. This may seem like a small matter, but it's actually a very big one—a matter of respect. And in the prison mentality, respect is a big issue.



#### **R-E-S-P-E-C-T**

Not listening carefully is a sign of disrespect that can easily burn bridges in doing prison ministry. You send the message that you don't really care about what the mentee is saying.

Basic training for mentors includes this pattern of listening and answering: listen...listen...listen...answer. Listen...listen...listen...answer. Those who understand and use this pattern will make fine mentors.

### **Listen without Judging**

One mentor spoke about how he was speaking with his mentee (who happened to have been a sex offender), and was trying to pick their brain as to how we can better help other sex offenders when we work with them. The mentee's number one answer, without thinking about it at all was: "Don't judge me. I've already been judged, and I feel worse about myself than you think lowly of me. I need somebody who can listen without judging."

The mentee made a good point. Mentees have already been through the court system, so you don't need to re-judge them. You're here to help them while they're on the path to correcting. In fact, listening without judging is so important that it's actually a prerequisite to being a mentor.



#### **Listening Does Not Constitute Agreement**

Listening carefully to what a mentee is saying does not necessarily mean you agree with them. It does mean that you care about them and what they're saying and you respect them enough to let them finish, even if you do disagree.

People in society tend to speak up if they disagree with you and try to talk over you in an effort to correct you. So if a person isn't interrupting them and saying, "You're wrong; let me give you my opinion," they interpret the silence as agreement. It doesn't need to be that way. The silence is an effort to listen without judging or jumping to conclusions.

Your mentee could be telling you something horrible that's totally wrong, and you want to tell them, "You're wrong...." Instead wait. Let them finish. Their last sentence could be something like, "...And then I totally realized how badly I screwed up." You don't know the end until they've finished speaking.

Mentees need support and guidance, not judgment. For example, they could be having homosexual tendencies and have mixed emotions about that. You can be supportive of how they're feeling and what they're going through, striving to help them without being supportive of gay pride and all that goes with it. You're supporting your mentee and the issue they're struggling with; you're not throwing your own moral beliefs away.

We're not counselors or psychiatrists. We're not there to lay out the plan. That's something they'll come up with. But we are there to steer that plan. We're the kid in the back of the canoe with the paddle, while our brother is up in front trying to go in a given direction. Mentees are speaking to be understood, and our job is to listen in an understanding way, without judging or trying to provide all the answers.

We are there to walk with the mentee through whatever they're going through. We may help them toward the answers they need—again, steering them—but it's not ours to do for them. You're taking into account what they're going through as you walk in their shoes and strive to understand what it's like to be them. You realize you're not better than them, and you are not in a position to judge them.



### **The Dangers of Judging**

Most mentees have probably had a judgmental experience with Christians in the past. If a mentor duplicates that, it's going to cause the mentee to shut down. They'll consider you to be like all the others, and fail to see you as someone who cares for and respects them.

### **Find Out What Their Struggle Is**

There are some hot spots and struggles that are common among nearly all people who have been incarcerated and are striving to re-enter society. Various addictions, anxiety, depression, family relationships, and financial struggles are some of the common difficulties. With most of them, you can talk to someone who has experienced them, read books and study websites dealing with the



difficulty, or talk to another mentor who has dealt with the problem. You may even be fortunate enough to find a mentee with that struggle who can tell you firsthand how to deal with it.

Those are generalities, however. Until you start asking the open questions and get your mentee talking, you're not going to know the specifics: whether they're a closet drinker or a social drinker, for example. Only by talking to them will you discover they're a safe drinker who'll drink themselves to oblivion but will never get behind the wheel of a car in that condition; and they're disgusted by people who do. There are different kind of drinkers, and if your mentee struggles with alcoholism, you're going to want to know their unique experience. You not only want to know what an alcoholic is like; you want to learn what THIS alcoholic is like.

As you conduct your meetings week after week and use your listening and observing skills, asking the right questions, you will come to an understanding of your mentee's unique circumstances. The list of possible unique struggles is long: there are addictions, to alcohol, sex, drugs, gambling and the like. There are mental struggles such as dealing with anger, depression, anxiety, and trust issues. There are familial problems such as going through a divorce, having a family that no longer communicates, or a custody battle. There are financial difficulties brought on by joblessness, debt, or paying restitution and legal fees. There are even religious issues such as doubting God's existence, questioning God's love, or having been "burned" by the church or its leadership. Such struggles can become barriers or bridges depending on whether or not you allow them to give you insight into your mentee's life and experiences.

### **Understand Where They're Coming From**

As you become familiar with your mentee's struggles, you are enabling them to paint a picture of their life. As they do, it shouldn't faze you if they say they grabbed another bottle or they were hung over and couldn't get out of bed for a day. You learn the various stages they go through and how they react to each.

As you listen uncritically, you come to appreciate what this "artist" is telling you by their painting rather than focusing on the quality of the perspective or brush strokes. A child can scribble with crayons really hard, and you can tell that child is angry. That same child can write a note in fine penmanship, clearly articulated, and you can tell that child is simply putting a point across. A similar thing is true with the picture your mentee is constantly painting for you. There is a reason for what they're telling you (or not telling you), and it's all part of their painting.

Perhaps in their painting, suddenly there's a house over here, and they start talking about their weekend, or you hear them verbally paint a dark alley over there with bars and all that goes with them. You're beginning to see their whole life in this big picture. You know which parts of it you want to talk to them about in the future. You know when there are people or places in the picture that don't

belong there, and you'll want to discuss that at some point down the line. When they first come in, you have a blank canvass, but through listening, understanding, and trust, you enable them to paint for you the picture of their life.



### **Get Mentees to "Paint Their Picture"**

Pretend you don't know anything about their life or circumstances. Ask questions until you understand. Their responses will paint the picture you need to appreciate where they're coming from.

Of course, then it is your job to interpret that picture. You want to know what they're trying to tell you; you also want to know WHY they're telling you what they are. They can talk about going out to a party and having a good time with friends. They'll say, "I had a good weekend," when in reality they're trying to sidestep admitting to you they went out and got drunk. They could use 1000 words to talk about this whole big weekend and how they got away fishing with the guys, and the weather was beautiful. But in the end, all they really wanted to tell you was, "I screwed up this weekend. I fell off the wagon. I need help. I'm depressed now." Once you really know them and how they normally talk about things, you can learn to interpret the picture they're painting for you.



### **Patience Is More Than Just a Virtue: It Builds Trust**

It takes a long time for mentees to paint a picture for what is probably a three-sentence description of what they really meant to tell you. It may at times try your patience waiting for them to come to the point. But the more they tell you, the more trust is being built in your relationship with them. Just showing you the picture is a big step, because it's getting beyond the walls they've been accustomed to building up in prison and in relationships. You're patiently cutting windows into those walls.

As you understand where mentees are coming from, you realize more and more that they're much the same as you are: they're happy; they're sad; they're depressed; they're sorrowful; they're stubborn; they get angry; they laugh. It's all the things we all do.

The flip side of that, however, is there are differences. Most of us haven't had to deal with things like incarceration, addictions, being homeless, and not knowing how to read, balance a checkbook, or go grocery shopping. So don't take anything for granted. Yes, they're "normal," but their normal or their reality is likely not the same as yours. What is normal to them may not be normal to you. Listening carefully for those similarities and differences will help you understand better where they're coming from.



### Five Things To Do As You Listen to Mentees' Responses

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | READ BETWEEN THE LINES.                |
| 2. | LISTEN WITHOUT FORMULATING THE ANSWER. |
| 3. | LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGING.                |
| 4. | FIND OUT WHAT THEIR STRUGGLE IS.       |
| 5. | UNDERSTAND WHERE THEY'RE COMING FROM.  |



### Activity: Listen to the Responses of the Person

It's your turn to listen to the responses of the person.

**Step One:** Find a partner to interview, either from your circle of friends or from among acquaintances whom you don't know very well. Ask them to name something that is true about them that most people don't know about. With questions, get them to paint a picture for you of this aspect of their life.

**Step Two:** What might a mentee be hiding in the following statements? Read between the lines:

"I attended my nephew's 21st birthday party last Saturday. There was a big family gathering, and it was quite a bash."

"I've been sleeping over at a friend's house lately. He doesn't mind my being there. He can use the company."

"I haven't been to church in a while. They only have one service, and it's a little too early for me."

**Step Three:** Have a partner or a cooperative family member describe to you what they did last evening. On a blank sheet of paper, draw a sketch of the picture they are painting for you of their evening (Just a crude sketch—stick people and the like—will do.). Then show them your drawing and explain what you've drawn.

Ask them how close your interpretation is to what they said.



## Your Turn to Converse and Listen

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It's your turn to converse and listen.

### Review and Exercises

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

#### Observe the Person

- Step One: Initiate a conversation with a friend, classmate, or family member. After the conversation, on a sheet of paper, in one column write down what you observed about their appearance and their tone of voice. In an adjoining column, indicate what the things you observed could mean about the person you interviewed (i.e., they were irritated about being interviewed, they just got out of bed, they were in a hurry, etc.).
- Step Two: Turn on a television show. Watch it for five or ten minutes. Pick out a person you see on the screen and write a description of their body language. (Yes, it could be a basketball player, football player, or someone being interviewed on a talk show. Someone in a sitcom or drama might be better.) After your description, write down what this body language may mean about the character or person you observed. Remember to look for open versus closed body language, and anxious versus relaxed body language.
- Step Three: Try to position yourself in a crowded place (sidewalk, concert, bus, waiting area of an office or restaurant). Note the smells you observe of the people who surround you or whom you pass by. What might these smells indicate about the person?

#### Ask the Right Type of Questions

- Step One: From within your circle of friends, relatives, and acquaintances, find two who are willing to be interviewed. Knowing what you know about that person, ask an open-ended question to each one and note information you learn which you didn't know before.
- Step Two: What things might you deduce from the following direct questions and answers?

Did you have anything to drink last week? "No."

Did you go to church last Sunday? "No."

Did you meet with your parole officer when you were scheduled to last Tuesday?  
"Yes."

Did you have any contact with your ex-spouse? "Yes."

Step Three: With another student, role-play a dialogue between a mentor and mentee making use of both indirect and direct questions. It is your first meeting together, so you have a lot to learn about each other. When you're done, switch roles.

### **Listen to the Responses of the Person**

➤ Step One: Find a partner to interview, either from your circle of friends, or from among acquaintances whom you don't know very well. Ask them to name something that is true about them that most people don't know about. With questions, get them to paint a picture for you of this aspect of their life.

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## Lesson 3: Build a Relationship with the Mentee, Yourself, and God



### A Relationship: the Prerequisite and Result of Mentoring

Mentoring someone means walking with that person. As you walk next to them in life and learn about their past, their likes and dislikes, personality, strengths and weaknesses, you get to know them as they let you inside their life, and they get to know you. They share things with you which they haven't shared with a whole lot of people. In this way, a relationship develops—at least, that is your goal as a mentor. You want to develop a friendship with them—perhaps even a lifelong friendship.

We need to build a relationship because not only will we have a potentially lifelong friendship and not only do we get to love someone the way Jesus has loved us, but we also realize that building a relationship is a prerequisite to truly mentoring somebody. Ironically, not only is building a relationship with the mentee a prerequisite to being a mentor; it is hopefully also the most important result of mentoring that person.

As mentors, we are not psychologists or professional counselors. Mentees are not required to sit and tell us anything. Yes, we believe in confidentiality. But it's not the same as someone who can walk into a psychologist's office and tell him

anything and it's all in a day's work. As a mentor, we are a friend with a sidecar of accountability. It means something special when mentees open up to us and tell us something they haven't told anyone else. We're not sitting there with five degrees on our wall. It's more like walking over to your neighbor and getting them to tell you about their drinking problem. You need a relationship to accomplish that.

So we're relying on the relationship to make them want to open up. It's not the courts mandating that mentees come in and talk to us. We disclose that the very first time we met with a mentee. We explain that we're all volunteers and not specially trained to do any of these things; we're just people that care about you and want to help you if you're up for that. Even for those mentees who start off not really wanting to meet with you or feeling compelled to do it for some reason, it is your relationship with them over time that will get them to open up so you can help them. They know there's this person who cares about them, who's willing to spend their own time meeting with them. And that relationship is what will lead them to share more of themselves so you can give them Christian compassion, counsel and guidance.



### **How to Build a Relationship with the Mentee, Yourself and God.**

1. BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MENTEE.
2. RESPOND TO THE MENTEE APPROPRIATELY.
3. CONNECT TO GOD'S WORD.

### **Build a Relationship with the Mentee.**

Based on the various roles we play in life, we all have relationships with other people. Some may be closer relationships, some may be rocky relationships, and some may be rather distant relationships, but we all have relationships. We may be a father or a son, a neighbor or a friend, a boss or a coworker. The best of those relationships are those we would characterize as "friend," even if they also happen to be that of a son, father, neighbor, boss, or coworker. It means we've taken time to truly get to know someone, and they've gotten to know us. It's the same in developing a relationship with a mentee as their mentor. You're still the mentor, and they're still the mentee. But hopefully you also become a friend as time goes on.



## Build Trust

In any relationship, especially in one characterized as a friendship, trust is an important factor. Only when you trust someone can you open up to them and share things that are significant in your life. It's the same with a mentee. But trust is something that is built over time.

To build and maintain trust, do what you say you're going to do. It's especially difficult to build trust because those with incarceration in their background have been conditioned not to trust people. They're used to people not following through with things, or saying things and not doing what they say they're going to do. They're used to hearing a lot of words, but not seeing a lot of action. Time and time again, your mentees need to see you do what you say you're going to do. This is what will make you stand out as someone who is different from so many other people. You've proven yourself trustworthy.



### Consistently Keep Your Word

By doing what you say you're going to do, you build trust between yourself and your mentee. But that trust can be lost as quickly as it's gained if you don't consistently follow through with your promises. Maintaining trust is as important as building it in the first place.

Being trustworthy means your mentee can rely on you to keep your word, especially in situations your mentee considers to be emergencies. Their emergencies are important, even if they may not always seem that way to you. For someone who just got out of prison, getting a phone so they can make a phone call to get a letter of recommendation could be an emergency. It may not seem like a big deal to you (it's just a letter after all), but it is a big deal to them. Take their emergencies seriously.

Time is also of the essence. If they've been in prison for a long time, they may not realize that so many things are done online now and things move so much faster. So getting things done quickly may make them seem like emergencies. Your mentee is thinking, "I need to get this done right now, so it's an emergency to me." If you delay, you're saying their emergency is not important to you, and you're not empathizing with them. It's important to act on their emergency and work with them through it in a timely manner. And that means in a manner that is timely to them as they see things.

**Drop Everything? It Depends....**

Placing importance on mentees' emergencies doesn't necessarily mean dropping everything you're doing to handle them. But it does mean talking with them and making a plan. For example, if you get off of work at 2:30 and arrive home by 3:00, tell them you'll call them by 3:15 to work through their emergency. Be sure you call them by that time. At least they have a timeframe with which to work, and you have a target that should easily enable you to keep your word and prove that you're taking their emergency seriously.

How will you learn what is important to your mentee—what they consider to be an emergency? Listen! That goes back to everything we've already covered in our discussion of listening and its importance in building relationships. Only then can you tell how your mentee is progressing and what they consider to be their major concerns.

In building and maintaining trust, it's also vital that you admit your failures. Maybe you said you'd call them after work by a certain time, but you had to work late. Apologize for what happened without making excuses. It shows your mentee that their emergency is still important to you. It shows them that **THEY** are important to you.

In the beginning it might even be a good idea to explain that you are a volunteer and you're certainly not perfect. Admit that there likely will be times you will fail and need to seek your mentee's forgiveness. If you do fail your mentee in some way, be quick to be right there with your apology, seeking their forgiveness so it doesn't grow into something more harmful to the relationship.

**Why Are You Doing This?**

As you admit your failures to your mentee, it might be a good time to remind them of why you're doing what you're doing as a mentor, albeit a volunteer mentor. You might joke that if you do a really good job, you'll get a 20% pay increase next year. But the real reason you're serving as a mentor is that you know what God has done for you in Christ, and you want to share that hope with someone else. If you can see potential in someone else and help them uncover that potential, you're a successful mentor. You are in a position to learn from your mentees much more than you are sharing with them.

## Build a Friendship

All too often people look at inmates as horrible people who are incapable of doing anything right. They are these awful sinners. Imagine how you would feel if that's how everybody at your church looked at you. Why go? You want your mentees to know that you don't look at them that way. Yes, they made some mistakes; sin is in the world. You have enough experience to know that sinful human beings are capable of doing a lot of stupid things. But that doesn't mean you're going to hell. And it doesn't mean that no one loves or cares about them, because you do! Because Jesus loves you, you love your mentees. In mentoring, you have that personal relationship with them, walking together with them. Walking together with a mentee means doing life together.



### A True Friendship

You are striving to build a personal relationship with your mentees, in which you are walking together with them through life. You care enough in Christ to do life together with your mentee.

Doing life together means asking yourself in the midst of their emergency, "What would a true friend do?" If your mom died, would a true friend just send you a card, or would he come over to your house, listen to you, and empathize with you? True friendship is doing life together. When there are ups, you're celebrating with them, and when there are downs, you're helping them deal with them. It's not, "Wait until our scheduled appointment next Tuesday at 3:00 o'clock,"—that is the "business side" of mentoring. This is the "personal side" of mentoring. You are brothers and sisters in Christ.



### The Professional and Personal Sides of Mentoring

The professional side of mentoring is supporting the mentee and keeping them accountable with the nuts and bolts of the mentoring program. They came for help with financial issues or addiction issues, so that is what you will address in your meetings and scheduled appointments. The personal side is, "Let's go to a barbecue," or "Let's go for a walk." You're showing mentees you care by including them in your life. It's as though you're a friend on one side and a counselor/probation officer on the other side. But you're mixing them together, with a heavy emphasis on the friendship.

If they attend church with you, you want them to be a part of that congregation, feeling welcome as a brother in Christ. You don't want to think of them as an inmate whom you're going to fashion and mold into the best they can be in that

congregation or society, but in reality they're still just an inmate. You want to treat them as a personal friend in Christ.



### Build a Friendship

1. WALK TOGETHER IN LIFE WITH YOUR MENTEE AS A GENUINE FRIEND IN CHRIST. (PERSONAL)
2. REMEMBER THAT THIS FRIENDSHIP DOES NOT PRECLUDE HOLDING YOUR MENTEE ACCOUNTABLE AS HIS MENTOR. (PROFESSIONAL)

### Care for Your Mentee

At the heart of any friendship or positive relationship is truly caring for the other person unconditionally. You care by empathizing with your mentee. That means remembering what they've shared with you. If that means taking notes after a session or keeping a journal by maintaining a log of what they've shared with you, that's fine. However you do it, keep confidentiality in mind—something we'll discuss more later.

It may help to review the first chapter of general characteristics of inmates to understand what life looks like to them. Your experiences are likely different from theirs. If they had an alcoholic father, you may well not understand what that really looks like because your father probably wasn't an alcoholic. But you can read and do research about people who had an alcoholic and abusive father or who were sexually abused to gain more understanding. You may not be able to understand life on the mentee's level if you haven't experienced the same things, but you can listen to them and share their pain as much as possible.



### An Effort to Empathize

If you're struggling to empathize with your mentee,

1. Listen carefully to what they're saying.
2. Think about how you'd feel if you were in that situation. Try to feel what they're feeling.

At this point it's important that you don't minimize what they're sharing with you, addressing it with a platitude like, "Oh well, you know God doesn't give you more than you can handle." There is a place for sharing God's words and

promises, but at the point you're empathizing with your mentee, you just want to sit with them, listen to them, and come to understand them. You feel what they feel. Once you empathize with them, you're showing you care.

Caring for your mentee also means you hold them accountable. That means not letting them "off the hook" for things they're supposed to be doing on the road to progress. If they're not attending AA meetings, don't just let it slide. Maybe they didn't have a ride, but what is a practical solution to the problem? They will respect you far more if you're not a pushover—someone they know they can walk all over. Holding a mentee accountable doesn't mean bull-nosing them and shoving them into a corner, putting them into their place when they don't comply. They won't respect that either.

Because we've told them so upfront, mentees know that one of the things they can expect from us is that we hold them accountable. If they're struggling with alcoholism, pornography, drugs, or one of those types of behavior, they know we're here to hold them accountable. If that means meeting with the mentee and their parole officer so we know how to better provide help, we will do that because it shows we genuinely care. We don't want our mentee to go back to prison!

If a mentee is struggling with pornography, holding them accountable may mean looking at their Covenant Eyes record. If you see something there that shouldn't be, you're going to want to call them on it and say, "Hey, it looks like you've been struggling a little bit here. What's going on? What were the triggers that caused you to look at this? Is there something that I can do to help, like contacting you on Friday night to check in and see if it's an issue or not?" Then make sure you make a mental note to actually make the contact on Friday night! By holding them accountable, you're showing you care enough to truly help.

All of this takes patience. That can be especially challenging for someone who has never been a mentor before. When there's a potential for relapse and when changes in mental or physical habits take time, having patience is a challenge. You have certain expectations about how a mentee is going to respond and how quickly changes are going to take place. And when it doesn't work out that way, it can be frustrating.

New mentors may not realize that the potential for relapse is huge, especially during the first three days or 72 hours of being out of prison. During that time, all the challenges start to become real for the mentee, and the hopeful attitude can fade away because they see the wall of hurdles that they have to jump over. The end of 14 days is also an important benchmark. At that point it's very common for them to give up, reasoning that it was easier to be in prison than do what they have to do on the outside. If your mentee gets to the 3-day and 14-day milestones, be mindful of that and celebrate. Check where they are and encourage them,

"Keep up the good work." After a full year the incidence of relapse goes way down, so if you can get to that point, it's really significant.



### **Focus on the Small Wins**

There's no big picture in overcoming self-gratification. It's like a long, slow moving locomotive. It will seem to take forever and eat you up if you don't focus on the small wins—little specific things the mentee shares with you that show they're making baby steps of progress. Even if it's two steps backward for every one forward, focus more intently on the one forward.

Change in mental and physical habits takes time; the same is also true for spiritual habits. It depends upon the individual person, and it depends on the action plan with the specific goals you're setting with the mentee (see the next chapter). If a person is dealing with depression or some kind of addiction, and they've been in it for a long time, it can take the rest of their life to keep moving through that challenge. In general, the first year of any major change is going to be a struggle, and there are probably going to be relapses. But that doesn't mean they're going back to prison or jail.

For example, if pornography is your mentee's weakness, it just means that you keep in mind that there's a likelihood that they're going to gain ground and then take several steps back before gaining more ground. Don't take the setback personally, reasoning that you didn't do a good enough job in working with the mentee or you didn't pray enough for them. It doesn't depend on you. It depends on the person and how God is working in their life.



### **Ignorance Can Be helpful**

Most mentors are not trained and certified as psychologists, social workers, or the like. Most of us have never spent any time in prison or living within the life many mentees have experienced. Use your own "ignorance" as a tool to get them to open up. Be dumb. Ask curious kid questions. Have them explain something you don't understand. They will see you have interest in what they have to say and you will gain useful knowledge for future use with them and other mentees.



## Activity: How to Build a Relationship with Your Mentee

It's your turn to build a relationship with your mentee.

**Step One:** Over the course of two days, keep a personal journal of the ways you respond to other people's needs with your offers of help and assistance. (It could be as simple as returning a phone call or cleaning up dishes after breakfast.) Note if and when you follow through. Also note whether or not you admitted your failures to them when you did not follow through with something.

**Step Two:** In your journal started above, reflect on a friendship you had or have in your life. Note how it started, what kept or keeps it going, and what you share in common. How do you "walk together," doing life together? How might a similar recipe work in a relationship with a mentee?

**Step Three:** Choose one of the following scenarios, and decide how you would respond. Write notes in your "journal."

- a. You are a supervisor, and one of your workers dresses sloppily, is late for work, and misses work frequently. Before writing up the individual or taking disciplinary action, what would you want to know? What action might you take?
- b. Your neighbors do not seem to take very good care of their home and property. It makes yours look bad. The lawn is weedy and long in summer, the snow is not shoveled in the winter, and you see very little activity around the house.
- c. You notice that your teenage son or daughter's grades are slipping, they're keeping to themselves a lot, and they don't seem to have very many friends. What would an ideal conversation with them sound like?

What similarities do you see between the scenario you have chosen and one you might face with a mentee some day?

## Respond to the Mentee Appropriately

Any relationship is a two-way street. One-sided relationships don't work out very well because there is no give-and-take. The second person never gets to respond or react to the first. In your relationships with your mentees, you will be asking questions, seeking information, reading their social cues, and doing a lot of listening. But you will also be responding and reacting. How will you do that appropriately? Not responding appropriately could undermine everything you have accomplished so far in building a relationship with your mentee. You want to show that you care about them by the way you respond.

### **Listen in a Non-Judgmental Way**

As you ask questions and seek information, you will be doing a lot of listening. As you do, how will you react to what you're hearing? Whether it's in your verbal responses, or your non-verbal reactions and expressions, you do not want to respond in a way that is judgmental.

For example, perhaps your mentee is struggling with viewing pornography. There is a stigma attached to that that is not attached to other struggles such as struggling with alcoholism or drug abuse. So if your mentee confesses to you that pornography is one thing they struggle with, you may think that this is absolutely disgusting. You may not understand how a person could sink that low and view pornography on a regular basis. If you reveal your disgust, even in a facial expression or raised eyebrow, you're listening in a way that is judgmental. In that reaction you're basically saying, "What everybody else thinks of you, I think that too."



#### **Add Care to Your Listening**

Any type of judgmental attitude that appears as you listen to your mentee will impede the relationship you're trying to develop with them. How do you avoid this? Add care to your listening. Genuine Christ-like love and concern for the person you're listening to will go a long way in averting a judgmental attitude. They are a redeemed sinner just like you.

You want to listen with an open mind in a sense. It's not that you're accepting or condoning sin; but you are having the Savior's heart of love and concern for the struggling sinner. Consider Jesus' reaction to the woman about to be stoned to death for committing adultery. His reaction was, "Then neither do I condemn you...Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). It takes a mature faith to respond in that way, and, as you mentor them in Christ, growing in him yourself, your faith will continue to mature.

### **Respond without Judging**

When you listen to mentees and they lay bare their life and soul, you are bound to hear amazing things. You will want to react and respond. You may listen in a way that is non-judgmental, but how do you respond in a way that is equally non-judgmental?

Practically speaking, responding without judging means putting on a "poker face" without letting your jaw drop open when your mentee says something unbelievable. In asking questions, you wouldn't respond by asking, "How can you do that?" because then you'd be judging.

Instead, ask questions that seek to understand why that behavior is prevalent in them. A better attitude is, "Teach me about that. I've run into other people in that



situation, so help me understand what that's like. I don't get it, but maybe if I did, I could help others struggling with that." Inviting mentees to explain why they feel as they do about certain things gives them the green light to share whatever they want to share without being judged or corrected.

Think before you respond to your mentee. Responses like, "Well, that's not what the Bible says," or "That's not a very Christian attitude," will shut down open communication. Make mental or written notes about items you can address later. There will be a time for correction, but understanding and a caring relationship need to come first. Otherwise, either that correction will fall on deaf ears, or your relationship will never make it to the point that you can openly give that correction.

### **Know When to Joke and When to Be Serious**

There is nothing wrong with injecting humor into your relationship with your mentee, as long as it doesn't come at their expense. Especially in the beginning, it's best not to joke about something that's directly related to them or something they did. It's been wisely said that humor should never sadden or offend at the expense of another person.



#### **When Do People Laugh?**

People don't actually laugh when something's funny; they laugh when they feel good. And they don't feel good until they first feel safe with you. Your first step is to help them feel safe with you. Then you can make them feel good, and maybe they'll even laugh!

Once again, it's important to learn to read the person. If they're lighthearted about something, it's probably safe to joke about. If they realize something they did was a rather stupid thing to do, and they joke about it, "Yup, I sure screwed up, didn't I?," you can agree in a lighthearted way, even if there's a serious side to it. In fact, the humor may be a way to get the conversation back on track to discuss the seriousness of what they did. But if your mentee is obviously saddened by something, or in a very serious mood, best to meet them where they're at before interjecting humor.

If they only perceive you to be a comedian or a goofball, they will consider you to be insincere and uncaring. However, when they laugh at humor used properly, it can indicate that you are connecting with them and building a relationship.

### **Think Before You Respond**

Responses to your mentee that are insensitive to the temptations and struggles they face will demonstrate a callous and uncaring attitude toward them. You

wouldn't say to a struggling alcoholic, "Hey, a bunch of us are going to the bar tonight. So sorry you can't come with us." That would be insensitive.

Unfortunately, you may not always know when you're being insensitive. A pastor leading a Bible study once said something in a generic way about people in prison, not thinking it would offend anyone in his audience. But, unbeknownst to the pastor, a former inmate was in attendance. They felt singled out and looked down upon, and very likely didn't come back. Knowing your audience goes a long way in avoiding situations like this one.

Responses that are focused on the mentee's past when they do not need to be are also sensitive areas. For example, your mentee was in prison in the past, but out of prison now. Don't keep taking them back to their time in prison. You're holding them in a place they want to get away from. The same with whatever addiction they may have had. If they're willing and motivated to go there themselves, that's fine. Otherwise, you're hurting them by holding them to their past.

### **Prioritize Topics They Are Dealing With Appropriately**

When mentees get out of prison, they have an entire plate full of things they need to pursue and accomplish. It can be very overwhelming. Part of your job as a mentor is to help them sort all of this out and prioritize what they need to be doing first. There are several important categories of things to consider that will help them tie it all together into one main end goal—living a godly life.

1. Help them walk in their struggle, whatever it is.
2. Tie them in with their faith each step along the way.
3. Tie them in with relationships.
4. Tie them in to financial concerns.
5. Ask them to help you prioritize them first. (The mentee does the work, guided by the mentor.)

If you know one of their struggles is abuse of alcohol, but they haven't really done anything to make you think they have a bottle of whiskey in their jacket or they're planning to go out on a bender, something else may be a priority. Perhaps you discover they haven't been in church for a while. That now becomes the priority. Or perhaps you're more concerned about their relationship with their family or the depression they've been suffering. Those become new priorities.

In your next meeting, perhaps you discover they've been getting along better with their family, but now everyone is drinking together. Now there's a new priority to address. They're all interconnected. The important thing is to select a few at a time so you and your mentee are not overwhelmed. And getting your mentee to determine what's most important is a helpful step to managing the priorities.

### Have a Mature Faith

All of this is not for the faint of heart. But it is for a faith-filled heart—a heart full of God’s grace. When you know the love your Savior Jesus has for you, you’ll be able to communicate that to your mentees. And when you understand the patience with which Jesus has dealt with you along the path of your life, you’ll be able to show that same patience to your mentees. When you are tied to your Savior by faith in every situation you face in life, and you “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5), you are being a true mentor to your mentees.

There is only one place that a faith like that comes from; there is only one who gives it. That is the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God, specifically the gospel of the Savior. And that leads to our next task.



#### How to Respond to Your Mentee Appropriately

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | LISTEN IN A NON-JUDGMENTAL WAY.                             |
| 2. | RESPOND WITHOUT JUDGING.                                    |
| 3. | KNOW WHEN TO JOKE AND TO BE SERIOUS.                        |
| 4. | THINK BEFORE YOU RESPOND.                                   |
| 5. | PRIORITIZE WHAT TOPICS THEY ARE DEALING WITH APPROPRIATELY. |
| 6. | HAVE A MATURE FAITH.  |



## Activity: How to Respond to the Mentee Appropriately

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It's your turn to respond to mentee appropriately.

Step One: Read and study the account of Jesus with the woman at Jacob's well in John 4:1-26. How did Jesus listen in a way that was non-judgmental? How did he respond to her in a non-judgmental way while still being honest with her? How did Jesus interject just a hint of humor while treating a very serious topic? How did Jesus treat her past life without insensitively holding her to it? What was his ultimate goal in working with her?

Step Two: List the goals you have in life as they pertain to the following:

Struggles you have with particular sins and sinful habits.

Your daily walk with your Savior.

The relationships you have with others.

Financial hurdles

Other goals

Attempt to prioritize the goals you have listed for yourself. Which are most important? Which can wait? How might you help a mentee develop a similar list?

Step Three: Read and study the following Bible accounts. For each account, write a brief paragraph describing how Jesus taught his disciples to have a heart full of God's grace.

Luke 10:25-37

John 13:1-17

Luke 23:32-43

## Connect to God's Word

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Why do you want to be a mentor for someone released from prison? As a Christian, why do you want to do any of the things you do in life? Ultimately, it's because of what God has done for us in Christ. When we know that, we have hope for all eternity. There may be setbacks, accidents, tragedies, pandemics, or any number of things that come up in life, but in the end it's that hope that matters. You want to share that hope with your mentees. And that means sharing the Bible with them. That's where the message of this hope in Christ is found.

### Know When to Use the Law Versus the Gospel

When you turn to the Bible where the message of the hope we have in Christ is found, you find two major teachings throughout all of Scripture: law and gospel. The law reveals sin and its terrible consequences; the gospel reveals the Savior God sent in the person of Jesus Christ to pay for sin by dying on the cross and rising from the grave. That gospel presents the hope of eternal life in heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. Through that gospel, God the Holy Spirit creates a living faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. In dealing with your mentee, it's vital to know when to use the law and when to use the gospel.

It's very likely that your mentee has heard the law most of the time, and the gospel very seldom if at all. Some of this is based on the many misinterpretations of the Bible out there which focus on doing good things to get right with God rather than focusing on what God has done for sinners in Christ. Much of what inmates hear is how rotten they have been and what they need to do to turn themselves around to get right with God. They're hearing the message, "You've gotta stop doing this and start doing more of that in order to get yourself together."

If they're not hearing that message from voices around them, they're hearing it from the voice inside of them, their very own conscience that is likely condemning them. That's what the conscience does. They know they've done things wrong; they're in prison, after all!

Now you come along as their mentor. If you start in by telling them, "Well, you can't live together. You shouldn't be drinking alcohol. You can't do this, and you shouldn't be doing that," you're reinforcing the message they've heard so many times before. Yes, it may even have been in Bible studies and religious materials they have read from other Christians. But what they've heard is, "You've got to make a commitment to Christ." The emphasis has been on what they need to do for Jesus rather than what Jesus has done for them. In other words, the gospel has been missing.

### Mentees Still Need the Law

Of course, that doesn't mean they never need to hear the law and all you should ever share with them is gospel. There are times to share the law and times to share

the gospel. It depends on where your mentee is in their faith-life. We share the law especially if mentees have no knowledge of the Bible at all. They need to know drunkenness is a sin, so you're going to want to show them that, particularly if they're not aware of that. That's true for any type of sin.



### **Go Slow in the Beginning**

It's similar to when you have visitors at church for the first time. Are you going to tell them on day one, "You can't be living together in sin as you are," or are you going to wait a little while until they've come for a few Sundays and you've built a relationship with them first? Then you start sharing the law to hold them accountable.

Whether it's in prison or in the military, there are similarities: there is structure and there are boundaries. Your mentee is familiar with that fact. If there are no boundaries in life, people get lost. If nobody is holding you accountable for anything, they must not care. Mentees need to know God cares, and they need to know you care. So you don't want to let sin just slide under the radar; they need accountability and structure to follow. The law provides that structure and accountability even as it reveals sin.

### **Above All, Mentees Need the Gospel**

But they also need to hear the gospel. It's easy for them to feel like they're not living up to anybody's expectations, especially not God's. So it's important for them to hear the gospel, and especially the pure gospel. They don't have to do anything to earn their salvation or standing with God; Jesus has done it all for them. Therefore they're forgiven 100%.

In many cases, mentees haven't heard that before. And even for those of us who HAVE heard it on a regular basis, we still need to hear it again and again. So THEY need to hear the good news of Jesus in its purest form often. They may not admit it, but in their psyche and innermost minds, they know they're failing. They're missing something, and they want something to fill that void that's inside of them. Some may admit that to you. What they need is Jesus and God's grace—his free and full undeserved forgiveness.



### Even More Gospel?

Because of mentees' background in hearing a great deal of law from many Christian teachers and in being painfully aware of their own failures, they may need more gospel than law to soothe their already guilty consciences. Knowing your mentees' mindset and beliefs will help you know when to use law and when to use gospel.

If a person is saying, "Yeah, I was out last night and I drank a whole bottle of Bourbon," and they're okay with that, it's time to apply the law with them. They're drinking to excess and not caring about it. They may even excuse or justify their actions.

But if that person says, "Like an idiot, I just drank a bottle of Bourbon last night. I wish I never had. I know I messed up again," you would want to use the gospel with them. The law has already done its work on their heart because they're repentant. Maybe you've spoken about this before so they know what God's law says about drunkenness, or that knowledge lies in their heart already. There's no point in bringing up the sin again because they've confessed it. You heard their confession. You can assure them, "In Jesus, you're forgiven."

In the first two weeks of working with a mentee, you may want to use the law as a curb, especially in the case of things like alcohol addiction. Using the law is a reminder to keep them on task. They need to remember there are consequences to pay when they sin—consequences they are already aware of, having just gotten out of jail. Breaking the law is one thing, but it's also breaking God's law. One will land people in jail; the other separates them from God because they're sinful human beings.

On the bright side, God has forgiven sinners in Christ. Mentees need to be continually reminded of the gospel promises because they're struggling with so many things when they come out of prison or jail. They need to know their Savior will never leave them or forsake them. Instead of turning to alcohol for peace and relief in their life, now they can turn to Jesus and the gospel promises they're hearing and learning about from their mentor.



### Mentor and Role Model

In most cases it will take a year for mentees to change to the point you know they're getting along okay with God's help. During that time, mentees will see you, their mentor, sin and go through some struggles of your own. Will they also see you go to the gospel promises of the Savior? You can be a wonderful example to them of one who turns to the Savior and his love in good times and in difficult ones.

This is true even when it comes to something like anger management. So many people think that showing anger in any way is a sin in and of itself. It’s not. Even Jesus showed anger—godly anger—when he threw the money changers and merchants out of the temple. Anger is an emotion that God gave us, but like any gift of God, it needs to be used in a God-pleasing way. God’s forgiveness for using anger in hateful and self-destructive ways leads us to use and channel anger properly.



### More to Read

WELS Prison Ministries has an excellent book, “God is My Anger Manager”, on gospel-motivated anger management. It is Book 9 in the Bible self-study series.

### Teach to the Mentee’s Level

It is very important to teach mentees God’s Word on their level and in a way that is relevant to their lives. If they’re dealing with some kind of sexual sin, or drunkenness, start there rather than in some area that may not concern them directly. You’ll want to get to know where they are spiritually and what they know doctrinally about the Bible, and go from there. The Bible’s teachings are like puzzle pieces that all fit together to give us the picture of God and his love that he wants us to have. There are some things mentees will need to understand first in order for other pieces of the puzzle to fit together later on when their understanding of the Bible is more complete.



### No Steak for Infants!

Start slowly with basic truths for those who are immature in faith and understanding of biblical truths. Use Jesus’ parables to teach spiritual lessons as he did before diving into the more abstract, doctrinal passages. Those are fine for those whose biblical understanding is more advanced.

Even if your mentee is the most eager of students, don’t attempt to teach every biblical doctrine at one time. Feel free to squirrel away Bible content until they are ready for it later on. You may even want to take notes. Many mentees will have had a great deal of exposure to the Scriptures, but they may not always have had a correct understanding of what they learned.

Squelch the temptation to be the Christian apologist who must correct every error on the spot and jump on every biblical truth that is misspoken. It’s much better to address those things which come up regularly and often. Pick your battles when correcting biblical misunderstanding. When they get a better grasp on one area,



then move on to another. Nobody wants to feel as if they are wrong all the time and that they don't really understand anything.

### **Let the Holy Spirit Work**

When the lines you have to walk seem rather dangerous and you feel as if it all depends on you doing everything right, it's important to remember to let the Holy Spirit do his work. Yes, you've been sent to minister to this group of people, and you're sharing the gospel with them. It's bound to be a struggle sometimes. You're going to need to be patient, as we've already pointed out. But the only way that change is going to happen in the life of mentees is if the Holy Spirit is working in their hearts through the gospel of Jesus.

There may be times you get frustrated because you cover the same thing several times. Then all of a sudden a month later, after the Holy Spirit has marinated on their brain and worked in their heart, you'll say the same thing yet again, and they'll get it. And it will seem to them as if it's the first time they've heard it. But it took that long for them to not only hear what you were saying, but to comprehend it. That's the Holy Spirit's work.



#### **Don't Take It Personally**

Don't take it personally because, statistically speaking, people are going to leave. And it's not necessarily your fault if they do. Yes, there's room for self-analysis and evaluating how you handled different things. Grow from that and move on. It doesn't mean you failed.

It's important for you as a mentor to know that it doesn't rest on you and your successes. You do your job and share the gospel with them; be their friend. But then let the Holy Spirit work. You may not ever see the fruits of your labor until you get to heaven.

### **The Law Guides; the Gospel Motivates**

As you apply the law, the Holy Spirit will use you to keep mentees accountable and hold them to their tasks. You can sidestep being judgmental if you simply remind them of what is being expected of them and you determine whether or not they're striving for success. Be sure to focus on their problems, not on the individual. In other words, their sin may be alcohol or drug abuse, or addiction to pornography. Yes, that may make them an alcoholic, a drug addict, or a sex addict. But that is not their identity. Identify and reveal the sin, but remember you are dealing with a redeemed child of God. That is their true identity in Christ. Their identity is not the sin itself. That's where the beautiful gospel of the Savior comes in.

It is that gospel that motivates the behaviors you and your mentees are striving for. Your mentees aren't going to stop drinking because the courtroom judge said they had to. They're going to stop drinking because of what Jesus did for them. Yes, God put that judge in his spot to help them. So now they will want to honor God by honoring that judge. It's not because they're being told they have to do or not do something; it's because they're being told they CAN do something because of what Christ has done for them.

### **Pray, Pray, Pray!**

Finally, pray. Praying tougher with your mentees creates the habit of relying on God. In many ways you're modeling prayer for your mentees so they can turn to God and talk to him, knowing he's always there. All you need to do is talk to him as you would your friend. That's what happens when you're praying together.

Not only pray with your mentees; pray for them. It's a constant reminder that it's not "on you," but the real work rests with God. It's not that you don't care. You do, and deeply. That's why you pray. You may see them again, maybe not. When they drift, or if they fall away from the program, pray for them. Maybe your job was to plant the seed of the gospel, and it will be somebody else's job to water it. It may lie fallow for 25 years before someone comes along and waters it, but you did what God called on you to do. And you prayed for his help and guidance.



### **How to Connect to God's Word**

1. KNOW WHEN TO USE THE LAW VERSUS THE GOSPEL.
2. TEACH TO THE MENTEE'S LEVEL.
3. REMEMBER THAT THE LAW GUIDES AND THE GOSPEL MOTIVATES.
4. LET THE HOLY SPIRIT WORK.
5. PRAY, PRAY, PRAY!



## Activity: How to Connect to God's Word

It's your turn to connect to God's Word.

Step One: Explain how you would apply the law or the gospel in the following situations.

- a. Your mentee reports that they haven't been to see their parole officer as scheduled, nor have they been to church as promised. The mentee says, "My P.O. doesn't really care about what I do anyway. He just shrugs his shoulders and says, 'Have it your way.' And church? They're all hypocrites there. They look all nice and happy, and I just don't fit in."
- b. When you ask your mentee why they went on a drinking binge again, they tell you that it's the only thing that makes the guilt and pain go away. They tell you that drinking is the only thing they really do well.
- c. Your mentee says things are going pretty well. Though they've slipped a few times and drifted into old addictions, they feel God would be pretty pleased with them because they're making progress. They say they've sinned very little since getting out of prison. Accepting Christ was definitely a good decision for them to make.

Step Two: Develop a list of five questions that might help you assess where a mentee is in their spiritual life and biblical understanding.

Step Three: Write a prayer asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance in the important role of mentor which you are about to undertake. Follow the well-used outline for a prayer as presented here: A = adoration of God

C = confession of sins

T = thanksgiving for specific blessings

S = supplication, your request for God's help



## **Your Turn to Build a Relationship with the Mentee, Yourself, and God**

It's your turn to build a relationship with the mentee, yourself, and God.

### **Review and Exercises**

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

### **Build a Relationship with the Mentee**

- Step One: Over the course of two days, keep a personal journal of the ways you respond to other people's needs with your offers of help and assistance. (It could be as simple as returning a phone call or cleaning up dishes after breakfast.) Note if and when you follow through. Also note whether or not you admitted your failures to them when you did not follow through with something.
- Step Two: In your journal started above, reflect on a friendship you had or have in your life. Note how it started, what kept or keeps it going, and what you share in common. How do you "walk together," doing life together? How might a similar recipe work in a relationship with a mentee?
- Step Three: Choose one of the following scenarios and decide how you would respond. Write notes in your "journal."
  - d. You are a supervisor, and one of your workers dresses sloppily, is late for work, and misses work frequently. Before writing up the individual or taking disciplinary action, what would you want to know? What action might you take?
  - e. Your neighbors do not seem to take very good care of their home and property. It makes yours look bad. The lawn is weedy and long in summer, the snow is not shoveled in the winter, and you see very little activity around the house.
  - f. You notice that your teenage son or daughter's grades are slipping, they're keeping to themselves a lot, and they don't seem to have very many friends. What would an ideal conversation with them sound like?

What similarities do you see between the scenario you have chosen and one you might face with a mentee some day?

### **Respond to the Mentee Appropriately**

- Step One: Read and study the account of Jesus with the woman at Jacob's well in John 4:1-26. How did Jesus listen in a way that was non-judgmental? How

did he respond to her in a non-judgmental way while still being honest with her? How did Jesus interject just a hint of humor while treating a very serious topic? How did Jesus treat her past life without insensitively holding her to it? What was his ultimate goal in working with her?

➤ Step Two: List the goals you have in life as they pertain to the following:

Struggles you have with particular sins and sinful habits.

Your daily walk with your Savior.

The relationships you have with others.

Financial hurdles

Other goals

Attempt to prioritize the goals you have listed for yourself. Which are most important? Which can wait? How might you help a mentee develop a similar list?

➤ Step Three: Read and study the following Bible accounts. For each account, write a brief paragraph describing how Jesus taught his disciples to have a heart full of God's grace.

Luke 10:25-37

John 13:1-17

Luke 23:32-43

### **Connect to God's Word**

➤ Step One: Explain how you would apply the law or the gospel in the following situations.

a. Your mentee reports that they haven't been to see their parole officer as scheduled, nor have they been to church as promised. The mentee says, "My P.O. doesn't really care about what I do anyway. He just shrugs his shoulders and says, 'Have it your way.' And church? They're all hypocrites there. They look all nice and happy, and I just don't fit in."

b. When you ask your mentee why they went on a drinking binge again, they tell you that it's the only thing that makes the guilt and pain go away. They tell you that drinking is the only thing they really do well.

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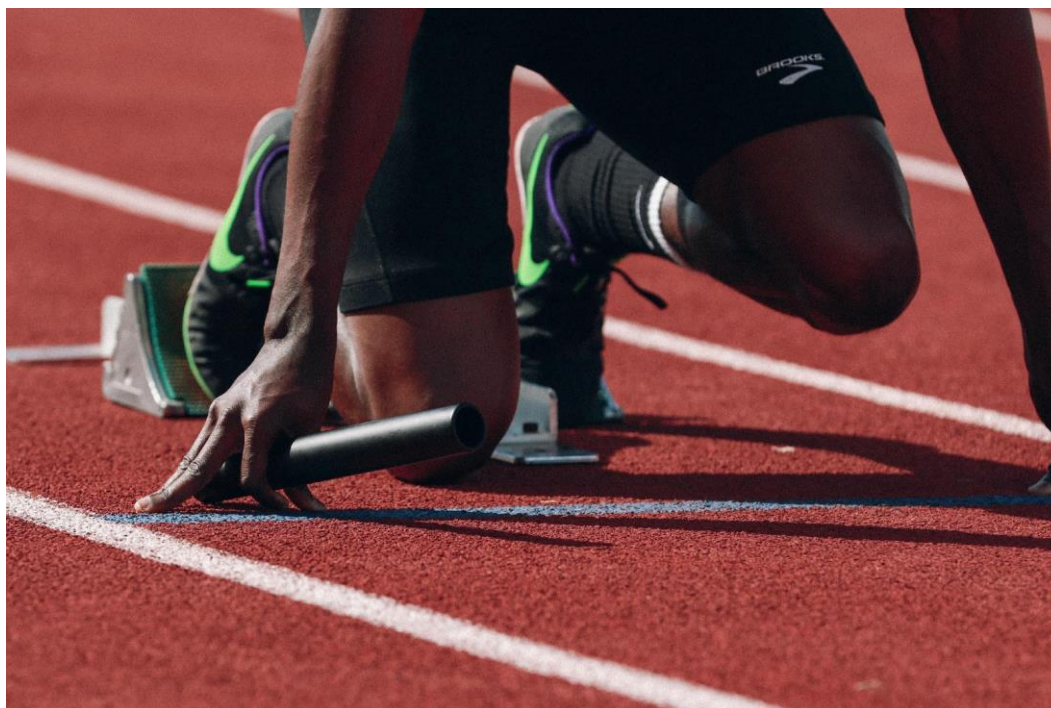
T = thanksgiving for specific blessings

S = supplication, your request for God's help





## Lesson 4: Build an Action Plan You Both Agree On



### Set and Achieve Goals and Be Able to Teach Others How to Do the Same

One of the greatest reasons why it is important to build an action plan you both agree on is that it will help to establish an agreed upon starting point and desired finish line. The parameters, boundaries, and goals are being determined. These are used as markers along the way to encourage and support the mentee when they are doing well and also to add support when they are lagging behind. This helps keep the mentee accountable.

So far, you have learned how to learn about a mentee in a general way, to converse and listen to a mentee, and to build a relationship with a mentee, yourself, and God. These have been taught, in part, so that you can think about an action plan before you begin to build an action plan that you and your mentee agree on. As a mentor, you are going to want to know what the end result for the mentee should be and what the action plan would look like. You will know these things based on the conversations you have had with the mentee and the details you have gathered while listening to the mentee.



### **It's Like the "Boot Camp"**

Learning about a mentee, listening to and conversing with them and building a relationship with them all help you begin to think about an action plan before actually building one with the mentee.

"To me, that's like the boot camp. We are going to give you the tools and teach you how to use them. And now this (building an action plan) would be one of the first real 'meat and potatoes' uses of your tools." -Jesse

The action plan will be defined goals and steps to achieve these goals. The purpose for these goals is to help the mentee determine and meet their needs which will result in "graduation" to a new way of life. The action plan will help the mentee understand where they are today and where they want to be in the future. It will show the way to get there and that there are small steps along the way that must be accomplished to obtain the end result.

The end result or "graduation" will look different for each mentee.

- The mentee may be on the straight and narrow, living a good godly life.
- The mentee may now know how to cope and deal with issues that come about without spiraling out of control and landing back in jail.

The small steps along the way may be:

- to write a resume to get a better job
- to be clean and sober for a year
- to be reunited with family and friends.

The benefits to the mentee and mentor are similar in this chapter. For the mentee, there is a fulfilling, rewarding ability to be able to check off things from their list as they complete those tasks. They will learn to build up those accomplishments for the next milestone and ultimately reach their end goal. You, the mentor, will hold the mentee accountable as you help them achieve the steps along the way.



### The Benefits of This Chapter for the Mentee and Mentor

**Mentor:** SEE THIS CHAPTER AS SETTING GOALS. YOU WILL HOLD THE MENTEE ACCOUNTABLE AS YOU HELP THEM ACHIEVE THE STEPS ALONG THE WAY.

**Mentee:** OBTAIN A FULFILLING, REWARDING SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AS THEY CHECK OFF STEPS TOWARDS A GOAL.

You will learn how to build them up for the next milestone and ultimately the end goal. You the mentor and the mentee end up merging together, setting parameters and guidelines for accountability. You are giving them something to shoot for; something better, something achievable. The end goals for the mentee are living on the straight and narrow and living a godly life.



### The Mentee Will Always be Growing

They will take steps and experience successes and failures along the way.

The mentee may never be truly free from addiction. They will never be free from sin.

Then the mentor will guide, support, and hold them accountable as they make these changes.



### Build an Action Plan You Both Agree On

1. DEFINE THE START AND END OF THEIR JOURNEY
2. IDENTIFY THE BARRIERS OF HOW TO REACH THAT GOAL
3. SET GOALS AND TIMELINES FOR GOALS

## Define the Start and End of Their Journey

---

As a mentor, when working with a mentee there may be a lot of unknowns at first. It may be difficult to know where to start if you are not sure where a mentee wants to end up. The process may take a lot of work or it may take a little work. Even the path which is taken for each mentee may be uncertain.

### Find Their Starting Point

The first step to helping a mentee find a starting point into their journey is to determine where they are now with their faith, family, friends, physical and mental health, or addiction.

- Are they going to church?
- Are they getting along with their mom?
- Do they have a job?
- Are they healthy?

A mentee may be rock solid. They may be going to church every Sunday. They've got a rock-solid faith. They've got their addiction under control, but they still need a little bit of tweaking; maybe they are fighting with their family all the time or maybe they don't have a job. Those are the things you will need to guide them through.

It's a good idea to remind the mentee that faith is our number one concern. It encompasses all that we do. We need God's help to get through this whole process. Show the mentee that family and friends can be means of support, but they can either help or hurt. Guide the mentee to determine where the family and friends are as far as support. You may also want to alert the mentee that physical and mental health might be barriers. Look at these and help them decide if they are supports or barriers.

Getting a good handle on where the mentee is now with faith, family and friends, and physical and mental health, as well as addictions, will help you be better equipped in determining their starting point.



### Guide a Mentee in Determining Their Starting Point

Read the paragraphs above and summarize in your own words how you would guide a mentee in determining their starting point.

1. REMIND THE MENTEE THAT FAITH IS OUR NUMBER ONE CONCERN.

2. SHOW THE MENTEE THAT FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN POSSIBLY BE MEANS OF SUPPORT.

3. ALERT THE MENTEE THAT PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH MAY BE BARRIERS.

To get a better idea of how to determine a mentee's starting point, take a look at this example:

"Jake" doesn't have a super great relationship with his mom. She's kind of in his face a little bit, kind of standoffish.

You, the mentor may want to find out if the other relatives are supporting him. Let's say they don't want to talk to him. They are sick and tired of him getting arrested. They just as soon kick him to the street, but they're not so far overboard that they've kicked him to the curb.

The flip side may be that "Jake" and his relatives do have a healthy family dynamic and get along and they enjoy actually spending time together.

You can ask him, "Where would you like to be in three months or a year?" That can become the goal to work towards.

Or, if Jake and his former spouse are on speaking terms, he might want full custody of their children.

Those are very different goals and would require different timelines.

The mentor's goals for the mentee might be a totally different picture than what the mentee sees for themselves. This is because the mentor has a different background from the mentee. Therefore, it is important to ask the mentee some specific questions:



### The Five Key Questions to Find Out the Mentee's Goals

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE?  |
| 2. | WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN YOUR FAITH LIFE?                                 |
| 3. | WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY?                            |
| 4. | WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND IN WHAT TIMEFRAME? |
| 5. | WHERE ARE YOU NOW?  |

Asking these questions will help you determine what goals need to be met and then you can help the mentee establish a timeframe.

Mentors may create a list of building blocks to help a mentee determine their starting point. The items on the list and the order of the items will differ based on the needs of each individual mentee.



### Building Blocks for Determining a Mentee's Starting Point

- |    |                            |
|----|----------------------------|
| 1. | Faith                      |
| 2. | Family and friends         |
| 3. | Physical and mental health |
| 4. | Addiction                  |
| 5. | Finances                   |
| 6. | Housing                    |
| 7. | Employment                 |
| 8. | Legal obligations          |

To get the starting point of the mentee we need to go back to everything we did in Lesson 3: Build a Relationship with the Mentee, Lesson 2: Listening/Conversing, and Lesson 1: Know their background. Then you can begin to build the starting points for all of these on your own even before you have this interaction in Lesson 4: Build an Action Plan You Both Agree On.

The mentor's role is to assist the mentee in developing their own action plan. Ideally, the mentees are coming up with the ideas for the action plan and the mentor can lead that through discussion. It might start off with some questions like, "How's it going with your mom? Oh, you guys aren't talking? Do you like that? Would you like to? Did you used to get along better? Would you like to see that again?" They may brush off the whole relationship; they may not. Be sure to read their body language and how they are responding to the questions being asked.

You might ask them about whether or not they've been partying lately. If they don't want to talk about it, or they say they've got that covered, or they avoid it, you'd have to be wondering whether or not this is a big issue. So you don't go through the list of 30 things one-by-one. You talk with them and find out what's going on now, and if they are where they want to be.

In talking with them you find out what's important for them:

**Mentor:** Oh, you haven't found a job? Is that causing you problems? You don't have money, right?

**Mentee:** Well, no.

**Mentor:** Okay, well, is that important? Is there something you can't do that you would like to be doing?

**Mentee:** Well, yeah, I guess that is important.

**Mentor:** Okay, great! How fast do you think we should be looking for it? You need a job, so you need a resume. Can we do that? How long do you think it would take to do that?

In your conversation, you actually may be addressing five different issues collectively. But you're still addressing the issues. And it's not like going through a checklist that's part of a form letter or survey. A lot of casual conversation is taking place in your first couple of meetings before you talk about setting goals. But you need to finally come in and flat out say, "Let's set an action plan. Let's set some smart goals."

You might write his goals on the board. For example:

- I want a '57 Chevy,
- I don't want to go back to jail.
- I wish I could gain custody of my kids.

It would be great if the mentee would say, "These are the things that are bugging me..." Most often you'll need to ask them. When you discover what could be an action point, you can continue the conversation like this: "Great. You talked about your relationship with your mom. Where is that right now? Do you talk? Do you write notes? Do you give each other dirty looks? Do you go out to dinner? Where are you in your relationship with her?...Oh, okay. So you are right here. Is that where you want to be?"

If they respond, "Well, I'd really like to be like it was ten years ago when..."

Then you can answer, "Well, what do you think it'll take to get there again? How long might that take?"

They may indicate that it could take up to two years to fix that relationship. Then you might suggest, "Maybe you guys could sit at the kitchen table together and exchange niceties about your day. Then after a month, where would you like to be? And after three months? Six?" In that way, you get them to fill in a timeline.

You may have to help them adjust their list and their timeline. For example, if they say they don't have a job and they'd like to get one within a year, you will want to push for a shorter time. Make a suggestion: "What would it look like for you to have a job by the end of the month? What would need to happen between now and then for you to have a job?"

If you can't get them to rattle off the right things, you might have to tell them, "You need a resume; you need to know where to look for a job." Then you know you can help them set some minor goals in order to achieve the bigger one: "Okay, let's start working on your resume and start looking online for employment. Let's do this over the next week. Then we can touch base and hopefully have an interview after two weeks. Does that seem doable?"

So you have gotten them to buy into the need for a job, and you've tweaked their timeline for getting one by giving them smaller goals to make it attainable. It's important to attach a timetable to goals so that achieving them doesn't go on forever. All the while, you're making the goals their ideas and helping them to agree to a workable timetable. It's difficult to attach a tried and true timetable that fits every situation. You need to look at what they're trying to accomplish and gauge the time it will take to accomplish it accordingly, helping them determine whether the timeframe they're suggesting is realistic or not. They need to agree to the goals and the timetable, or it's not likely to work.





### **The Difference Between Helping and Doing**

Sometimes it may seem easier to simply do something for the mentee in order that they may reach their goals more quickly, rather than providing resources and assisting them in the task. For example, it might be easier to sit down and write a resume for them rather than guiding them step-by-step through the process or providing templates and examples for them to use. Resist this temptation. It's better for them to exert the effort and learn from the experience so they can do it by themselves, perhaps unguided, next time. In this way they will learn more and grow from their sense of accomplishment.

So to simplify: in identifying goals, the mentee says or writes that they're "unemployed." Obviously, end game is to "get a job." You would want to learn what kind of jobs they want, and what they are capable of doing. What skills do they have, and do they have any idea of the types of jobs that are out there utilizing this skill set? From these questions you help them set intermediate goals to meet along the way to meeting the larger goal. Then you help them attach a workable timetable to each.

### **Building-Block Questions**

Each of the building blocks we have established has questions that may be asked of the mentee to help determine and flesh out goals and timelines. Questions with each building block might go something like this:

- *Faith*

What's your religious or spiritual background?

How frequently do you attend church?

Do you do other faith-based activities like Bible classes?

Is this a family event, do you attend with friends, or is it just you?

- *Family and Friends*

How do you get along with family members?

Do you communicate with family often?

Are your friends people you should be hanging out with?

Are these friends from the old life you're trying to get away from, or are they for the new life you're trying to connect to?

- *Physical and Mental Health*

Do you have any physical disabilities or health conditions?

Do you have any learning disabilities?

How do these conditions affect your daily activities? How could they affect any employment you might pursue?

Are you depressed or do you suffer from any other psychological difficulties? Do you have anger issues? Are you bipolar?

Are you seeking treatment/professional assistance for any of the above?

- Addiction

Are you coping with any addictions (drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography, etc.)?

Are there "triggers" you've identified that might lead you toward a relapse?

What has been most beneficial so far in helping you cope?

Are you facing any legal requirements in connection with your recovery?

- Finances

Do you have a budget? Do you know how to budget?

Do you have any money right now? Do you have an idea of how much money it takes to support what you need in life?

Do you have any restitution to pay?

- Housing

Do you live with any family members or friends?

Are you couch-surfing with family or friends? Are you welcome there?

Is where you are living a safe and stable arrangement?

If you're living with family members or friends, is this a good arrangement, or do you want to be living somewhere else as time goes on?

- Employment

Are you employed? If not, what steps are you taking to become employed?

What type of job are you seeking?

What skills do you possess? What skills do you need for the type of job you are seeking? How might you gain those skills?

Do you have transportation to get to a job?

- Legal Requirements

Are you facing any legal requirements as a condition of your recovery or parole?

What steps have you taken/do you need to take to satisfy them?

### Learn Their Finish Line

Knowing the answers to questions like these will help you assess where your mentee is as far as a starting point, and you will get a very good idea of goals you will want to help them establish. Their answers will help you help them determine the start and the end of their journey to recovery. They will not know they've arrived unless they understand where they are headed.

With the knowledge you gain, you will be able to determine what the end result of each building block will look like. You may also find out when it is they hope to cross the finish line in connection with each. Having these goals and understanding what success looks like in connection with each will give your mentee a focus for their prayers, hope for what lies ahead, and a sense of accomplishment as they tackle each step along the way of their journey.



#### What Are the Seven Building Blocks for an Action Plan?

- |                       |
|-----------------------|
| 1. FAITH              |
| 2. FAMILY AND FRIENDS |
| 3. ADDICTIONS         |
| 4. FINANCES           |
| 5. HOUSING            |
| 6. EMPLOYMENT         |
| 7. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS |



## Activity: Define the Start and End of Their Journey

It's your turn to define the start and end of their journey.

**Step One:** Make two columns on a sheet of paper. At the top of one, write "start" and at the top of the other write "end." Number 1 through 7 down the left side of the sheet. From memory, write down the seven building blocks for an action plan which you would hope to build with a mentee.

**Step Two:** Interview a close friend or family member as you would a mentee in regard to each of the building blocks. Write down where they are presently in regard to each of the areas. (If you can't find a friend or relative willing to work with you, write down information from your own life and develop your own action plan.)

**Step Three:** Based on the responses you receive to your questions, and what you determine is a "starting point" for each building block, determine what each goal should be at the journey's end. (Again, lacking willing participants, use this as an opportunity to set some goals for yourself.)

## Identify the Barriers of How to Reach That Goal

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Having a starting place and an ending place does not mean there is a direct, unobstructed path to meeting those goals. Things will get in the way. Perhaps right from the outset there are barriers and obstacles you can see that will prevent your mentee from meeting their goals. It's important to identify those barriers and have a plan for overcoming each of them. You already may have identified many of these obstacles in the questions you have asked in connection with each of the building blocks of the action plan.

### What is "Stopping" Them?

When it comes to reconnecting with God, getting a job, finding a place to live, overcoming an addiction, or improving financial stability, any number of things could get in the way of achieving goals. Let's focus on three very common barriers.

An important obstacle might be that the mentee has no support from family or loved ones. It might be their own fault, that they have "burned bridges" in these family relationships, or their situation or lengthy absence may have brought about this lack of support. Family may not want the mentee around or may have concerns of having to support them for any length of time. Friends can also be an obstacle to achieving goals, especially if they are part of the "old crew" they shouldn't be hanging around with.

Other obstacles are physical. Certain disabilities may limit the mentee's mobility or general ability to function in life to complete their daily tasks. If they have difficulty completing daily tasks, they likely also will have difficulty with employment. It's very possible some of these disabilities are the result of drug or alcohol addiction. Some may get better with recovery, others may not. It's important to know what the disabilities are and what the prognosis is for overcoming them.

Other barriers are mental. They may have a lack of faith in themselves to accomplish anything good. In some areas they may not see the need to change anything. Their "old way" of doing things may be so engrained that they see it as the only way. The result will be self-destructive as it has been in the past.



### What Are Three Common Areas of Concern Which Prevent Mentees From Meeting Their Goals?

1. THEY LACK A SUPPORT SYSTEM.
2. THEY HAVE PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS OR DISABILITIES WHICH LIMIT THEIR ABILITY TO FUNCTION.
3. THEY HAVE MENTAL OR ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF THEIR RECOVERY.

### How Do We Overcome that?

It seems self-evident that the way to overcome these barriers is to carry out the opposite of each one. For example, if the mentee lacks a support system, the way around the barrier is to help them build a support system. For one, YOU are an important support for them. You provide one-on-one encouragement and guidance; you are their mentor and friend. That is important.

Part of having support is also having resources. Making information available to the mentee on church and community resources is beyond helpful. It could be counseling resources, medical resources, housing resources—the list is almost endless. But if your mentee doesn't know where to find these resources, or is lacking computer skills or the ability to read, these resources are out of reach. You can help place the resources into their hands.

Even with resources, your mentee may need assistance in pursuing help and support. You might be able to help them fill out job applications. You can assist them in planning how to get to work when they secure a job. You can show them

where to seek financial support. You can point them to professionals and programs that will help them meet their medical/psychological needs.



### What Can You Do to Help Your Mentee Overcome Obstacles?

- |   |
|---|
| 1. BE A SUPPORT FOR THEM AS THEIR MENTOR AND FRIEND.                              |
| 2. PROVIDE THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO GET AROUND BARRIERS TO MEETING THEIR GOALS. |
| 3. GIVE YOUR MENTEE THE HELP THEY NEED IN USING THE RESOURCES YOU HAVE PROVIDED.  |



### Activity: Identify the Barriers of How to Reach That Goal

It's your turn to identify the barriers of how to reach that goal.

**Step One:** Name three goals that you have in your own life. Choose some of the areas that will be common in working with mentees (faith, family, job, housing, finances, addictions, and other struggles).

**Step Two:** In connection with each goal you listed above, what barriers exist in your reaching that goal? Make sure they are barriers and not merely excuses!

**Step Three:** What has to happen to overcome each obstacle or barrier getting in the way of you achieving your goal? What support would be helpful to you? What resources could you benefit from? How might you obtain these resources?

How has the above exercise helped you with some of your goals? How might it help you work with a mentee?

## Set Goals and Timelines for Goals

In determining with your mentee where they are as they begin their journey and where they want to be at the end of that journey, you will have already helped them to set certain goals for their recovery. In looking at obstacles to achieving those goals and ways around those obstacles, you already will have helped them set some sub-goals for the major goals they wish to achieve. Now you will want to help them make these goals more concrete and determine how "doable" they actually are. You will want to help them establish SMART goals.

### Define What a SMART GOAL Is

SMART goals are nothing new. They've been used in the realms of business and education for a very long time. SMART is actually an acronym. It stands for goals which are: SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ATTAINABLE, RELEVANT, and TIME-BASED.

Imagine a timeline with each of your mentee's goals on the right side, and each starting point on the left. In between each starting and ending point fall the micro-goals or subtasks that need to happen along the way in order to achieve the goal. The timeline is how long each of these will take and how long it will take to achieve the final outcome. To arrive at this task and timeline, you will help your mentee set these SMART goals.



#### Long-Term Versus Short-Term

Those returning from incarceration and dealing with addictions may have a very different perspective on what is short-term and what is long-term when it comes to goals. Your goal with them may be to "stay sober." While you are thinking a year, or perhaps even many years into the future, your mentee may well be thinking of the next hour. For this reason it's very important to break down long-term goals into shorter ones that are truly SMART goals. Otherwise, failures and obstacles may cause your mentee to simply give up because the goals seem unattainable.

SMART goals are, first of all, SPECIFIC. A goal needs to be detailed, well defined, and not open to interpretation as to how the end result will be achieved. It's not wishy-washy, or a moving target.

A SMART goal is MEASURABLE. Mentees need to be able to track their progress in a meaningful way. There has to be a way to measure success or a lack thereof.

SMART goals are also ATTAINABLE. They are realistic and able to be met, but not too easy either. If you're on a diet, you're probably not going to be able to

lose 50 pounds in a month. That's not attainable. On the other hand, losing a pound a week is attainable, but probably too easy. A good goal is attainable but not easy to reach.

Another characteristic of a SMART goal is that it's RELEVANT. It needs to provide value to their success and relate to their journey. Does it make sense? If they set a goal of buying a 1957 Chevy in a year, that may be a great and a neat thing to have, but what does it have to do with their struggle? How will it get them closer to the recovery and normalcy they are seeking? It doesn't fit in. It may be a fine life-goal to pursue at some point in the future. But it's not relevant now.

Finally, a SMART goal is TIME-BASED. How long will this take? Having no time limit leads to no dedication or desire to complete the goal. It's open-ended.



### What Are the Characteristics of a SMART Goal?

1. A SMART GOAL IS SPECIFIC
2. A SMART GOAL IS MEASURABLE.
3. A SMART GOAL IS ATTAINABLE.
4. A SMART GOAL IS RELEVANT.
5. A SMART GOAL IS TIME-BASED.



### Atomic Habits

When most people set SMART goals, they're looking for results. They may take all the right steps to assure that a goal is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. They may have the goal of losing 10 pounds in a month. They will likely achieve good results. But what happens when, in the span of six months, they've gained back the 10 pounds plus more? Something doesn't really become a habit just because it was a well-achieved goal. In order to reach a goal and maintain that goal, another layer needs to be added to the SMART goal. A system needs to be in place to stay on track. Perhaps part of that system is to work out for a certain period of time six days a week. Now there is a system in place to keep off the 10 pounds.



You can even go one layer deeper to make sure SMART goals are maintained. It is the identity layer. You have the goal and the system to attain it, but you see yourself as the person who is at the weight and in the physical condition you are reaching for. Without this identity, systems fall short. This identity fuels your quest to achieve your goals with the systems you have in place. Of course, knowing our ultimate identity is found in Christ adds an entirely new dimension to the whole concept.

This concept of deeper layers to achieving SMART goals is discussed in the book *Atomic Habits* mentioned in the resource section of this guide.

### Get Them to Say the Goals You Know They Need

As you meet and speak with your mentee, learning about their unique situation and listening to them describe the direction in which they want to go, you will likely be formulating some goals of your own for them. But resist the temptation to blurt them out. Have the mentee write down or dictate their goals to you. Yes, you might have to put in a few starter ideas to get the ball rolling, but avoid providing the biggest, more life-altering goals. Keep your suggestions simple, but valuable. The only way a mentee will be motivated to achieve those goals is if they see them as THEIR goals. They're not yours.

In no particular order, talk through the goals and discuss the value of each idea your mentee has expressed. Is it really valuable? Will it help them? Is it truly a SMART goal? If not, can it be made into one? Feel free to make subtle suggestions for tweaks and changes to what the mentee has expressed. Guide them in the right direction and give them gentle nudges to get them to say what you're thinking if you feel it's something they've missed. You can ask leading questions to steer them to the right conclusion.

For example, if you're talking about the goal of employment, and they say they want to have a job by Christmas, you can remind them that's eight months away. You can ask them what they're going to do for the eight months beforehand. How will they survive without an income? Finding a job by next week is probably not realistic, but you can steer them to say that, realistically, they'd like to have a paycheck coming in within a six week timeframe.



#### **"It's Not My Fault."**

It's crucial that the mentee comes up with the ideas. If the goal is not set and defined by them, they will have little or no ownership of the goal. If they stumble and fall, or even fail, it's "not their fault" because it wasn't their goal in the first place.

As your mentee comes up with goals, they may also dismiss some because of obstacles. Here are the barriers to achieving those goals. You can help the mentee convert them into sub-goals to be achieved. If they have their resume ready to go, but have stalled because they have no references, there is a goal you can help them with: finding references. Or perhaps you can help them find people who are open to having felons as workers. That barrier was just brought down, the goal is within reach, and the mentee's encouragement just went up. The situation is not hopeless.

You'll also need to help them prioritize their goals. Obviously, they're not going to be able to work on all the goals at the same time. Some may be worked on in tandem, but for the most part there will need to be a ranking in priority. It is probably not reasonable to take on any more than three goals at a time. They may be working on micro-goals across the board, but they need to limit their major goals to three or less.

For example, employment may be the first thing they need work on, but there is also this awful relationship they have with their mom. Unfortunately, they've had that poor relationship for 20 years, and you're not going to fix it in a month. Better to work on the unemployment first. You might suggest that they take 5 minutes each day to ask their mom how her day went, but that's it for now. It's still a goal they're working on, but they're working on the micro-goals first until they can get at bigger priorities like seeking employment.

### **Get Them to Be Intrinsically Motivated to Accomplish the Goal**

There is a difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from the outside; intrinsic comes from within. Understanding the motivation of the good news of forgiveness in Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, intrinsic motivation is far more effective. You want your mentees to be all in what they're trying to do, starting in their heart of faith. Deep down they are pursuing this goal because it is something, under God, they want for themselves. It's not something they are trying to accomplish because you, as a mentor, want them to or because the law requires them to do it. **THEY** want to do it, and they can say with full conviction, "I want this for me."

You can be their cheerleader and motivator under Christ. You can help them to identify what life will be like once the goals they have set are met. You can even get them to express how they will feel with the accomplishment of meeting their goals. But the motivation needs to come from the Holy Spirit working within them. He changes their will. Whatever it is, they need to want to do it, to be willing to do it, to be dedicated to achieving it, and to be disciplined to accomplish it.



### What if "I Don't Wanna"?

What happens if your mentee gives up on a goal? Do you merely take it off the table, even if you feel it is a goal that is valuable and necessary? Let's say they don't want to attend the AA meetings each week which they are required to attend. How do you get them intrinsically to buy into the idea?

Focus on their dedication not to return to incarceration. Focus on the benefit they will receive from the meetings and how this is just another expression of how they live their faith in Christ. Ask them how it would feel to go back to incarceration and be back at square one after the Lord has brought them so far.

### Set a Timeline

With the goals set and put in order as to their priority, you're ready to help your mentee set a timeline. Have them give you a general timeline for their goals, even if it seems they are throwing a dart at a dartboard. You will also have a number in your own mind as to how long most of their goals will take. Compare notes. Give them feedback and course correction on a general ballpark timeframe for completion. Some of what they suggest may be spot on. Other time allotments may be totally unrealistic. You may have to say, "Take your time with that because if you try to do it that quickly, you're liable to be defeated and then give up."

You will want to have them set a hard date for the completion of their main goals. Of course, unforeseen things can happen, new information can come to light, and circumstances can change, all of which can affect an overall timeline. But those things should not prevent you from assisting the mentee in coming up with one.



### What Steps Are Involved in Setting a Timeline?

1. HAVE THE MENTEE SET TARGET DATES FOR HIS GOALS.
2. HAVE YOUR OWN TIMELINE IN MIND; COMPARE NOTES.
3. REFINE, MAKE SUGGESTIONS, AND AMEND UNTIL THE TIMELINE IS REALISTIC.

### **Build Action Plan Based on Where They Want to Be**

Together with the mentee, you have established SMART goals they want to achieve. You also have written mini-goals together that lead up to those SMART goals. Finally, you have worked out a timeline for each goal. With the mentee, you may even have written on various dates along this timeline. Now you have the basis for an action plan.

This is going to be a work in progress, something that can be amended and changed as goals are reached or circumstances change. Nevertheless, based on where the mentee is at the beginning and where they want to be at the end of their journey, you have the first draft of an action plan to help them get there.



#### **What Does an Action Plan Look Like?**

In the appendix of this workbook, you will find a sample action plan to study and guide you in drafting future action plans with mentees. Use it as a guideline, understanding that every mentee and their situation is unique, even though there may be some common elements.

As you look over the action plan with your mentee, once again you will want to identify the biggest barriers along the way and how they will overcome each. These may already be worked into some of the mini-goals you have written with them. You will want to ask them what they perceive will be the biggest risk for failure. Find out where they would like your help along the way. Establish what they think they can do without help. While finding out what they think they can do on their own may show you where they're confident, it may also show what they're hiding or don't want you poking into. Keep your eyes and ears open!



#### **Questions to Ask Mentees as You Review Their Action Plan.**

1. WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST RISK FOR FAILURE?
2. WHAT DO YOU WANT MY HELP WITH?
3. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DO WITHOUT MY HELP?

Finally, you are at the point where you can set up follow-up dates and what the expectations will be for each date. Feel free to follow up by email or text message to remind them of what's coming up or to confirm the timelines you have set. Be sure to write down these dates and expectations as you go along. Don't rely on your memory.

With the action plan in place and dates on the calendar for when things should be accomplished, you are ready to begin meeting with the mentee to guide them toward reaching each of their goals. This is a time to feel a sense of accomplishment, and it is a time to thank God and to ask him for his guidance and blessing. Now the real work begins!



### **Activity: Set Goals and Timelines for Goals**

It's your turn to set goals and timelines for goals.

**Step One:** Write down three SMART goals which you have for the upcoming week. They may pertain to school, work, home, finances, faith, or any other area of your life setting goals might be helpful. Be sure they are truly SMART goals. (Review what a SMART goal is.)

**Step Two:** In connection with each of the goals you have written in the first step, write down at least three sub-goals that must first be completed to reach each major goal. (Feel free to write sub-sub-goals if you need to.)

**Step Three:** Work out a timeline for each of the goals and subgoals you have set. You should be able to be rather specific because you are only working within a total time frame of a week.

At the end of the week, review your action plan. How did you do? How did the plan help you meet your goals for the week?



## Your Turn to Build an Action Plan You Both Agree On

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It's your turn to set and achieve goals and teach others how to do the same.

### Review and Exercises

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

### Define the Start and End of Their Journey

- Step One: Make two columns on a sheet of paper. At the top of one, write "start" and at the top of the other write "end." Number 1 through 7 down the left side of the sheet. From memory, write down the seven building blocks for an action plan which you would hope to build with a mentee.
- Step Two: Interview a close friend or family member as you would a mentee in regard to each of the building blocks. Write down where they are presently in regard to each of the areas. (If you can't find a friend or relative willing to work with you, write down information from your own life and develop your own action plan.
- Step Three: Based on the responses you receive to your questions, and what you determine is a "starting point" for each building block, determine what each goal should be at the journey's end. (Again, lacking willing participants, use this as an opportunity to set some goals for yourself.)

### Identify the Barriers of How to Reach That Goal

- Step One: Name three goals that you have in your own life. Choose some of the areas that will be common in working with mentees (faith, family, job, housing, finances, addictions and other struggles).
- Step Two: In connection with each goal you listed above, what barriers exist in your reaching that goal? Make sure they are barriers and not merely excuses!
- Step Three: What has to happen to overcome each obstacle or barrier getting in the way of you achieving your goal? What support would be helpful to you? What resources could you benefit from? How might you obtain these resources?

How has the above exercise helped you with some of your goals? How might it help you work with a mentee?

### Set Goals and Timelines for Goals

- Step One: Write down three SMART goals which you have for the upcoming week. They may pertain to school, work, home, finances, faith, or any

other area of your life setting goals might be helpful. Be sure they are truly SMART goals. (Review what a SMART goal is.)

➤ Step Two: In connection with each of the goals you have written in the first step, write down at least three sub-goals that must first be completed to reach each major goal. (Feel free to write sub-sub-goals if you need to.)

➤ Step Three: Work out a timeline for each of the goals and subgoals you have set. You should be able to be rather specific because you are only working within a total time frame of a week.

At the end of the week, review your action plan. How did you do? How did the plan help you meet your goals for the week?



## Lesson 5: Run Recurring Meetings with the Mentee



### “Look Natural Until You Feel Natural”

You are a mentor, and you plan on meeting with your mentee to help them grow in their relationship with their Savior, reintegrate into society, master everyday life skills, and overcome any struggles they are having along the way. How often will you meet? What will you do when you do meet? How will you know if you're making progress? To answer these questions, it is important to know how to run effective meetings with your mentee, setting clear goals and outlining your next steps.

There's no set agenda for running a meeting with your mentee. But you will want to have a consistent pattern you can get used to. This will give some structure to your meetings and keep you accountable in your work as a mentor. Even if you're not a social butterfly or a great conversationalist, you will be able to be in a one-on-one setting with your mentee and, as one mentor has said, “look natural until you feel natural.”

It's good to have structure to your meetings so that you have a bulleted checklist in your head of things you want to accomplish when you meet with your mentee. Maintaining a structured meeting is more likely to get fruitful results. You can master all the things we've talked about so far, but if you drop the ball by running

ineffective meetings with your mentee, you could conceivably lose them in the end. You'll be far more productive if you follow at least a basic structure.

Granted, sometimes you will have your mentee come in with this one topic burning a hole in their brain, and you won't be able to talk about anything but that the entire time. But that's not going to happen every time. They will reach their goals at a faster pace if you follow a structure in your meetings to assure you are covering all of the bases.

And there's more: the repetition of structured meetings is ingrained in them what it takes to do all of this for themselves naturally.



### How to Run Recurring Meetings with the Mentee

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | PRE-MEETING: CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A RECURRING MEETING SCHEDULE. |
| 2. | MEETING: CONDUCT A MENTOR-MENTEE MEETING.                       |
| 3. | POST MEETING: RECAP AND DOCUMENTATION                           |

### Pre-Meeting: Create and Implement a Recurring Meeting Schedule

You have met with your mentee one, two, three times or more in "getting to know you meetings." Now it's time to plan the real work: creating and implementing a recurring meeting schedule. It is in these meetings you will work through the goals your mentee has set with your guidance, and it is through these meetings that you will strive to keep your mentee accountable so that they make progress.

#### Define and Agree on a Timeline for Meeting

When will you meet? That will need to be determined between you and your mentee. The dates and times of your meeting will, of course, need to be mutually agreeable. Does Wednesday at noon work? If not, how about Thursday evening after supper? Whatever you decide, you will want to try to make it consistent so that both of you can easily keep it in your schedule without forgetting.

Where will you meet? That, too, will need to be mutually agreeable so that both of you can get there easily. A fairly public place with privacy would probably be best. Is there a church facility available? The back of a local coffee shop? You'll want to keep disturbances to a minimum.

How often will you meet? That, too, will be something you want to agree to. But there are certain guidelines to follow that have proven to be wise. You don't want to meet so often as to overextend yourself and make it difficult for your mentee to meet goals. On the other hand, you don't want to meet so seldom that progress is

difficult to trace and it becomes difficult to remember what you talked about last. If you have twenty goals you want to meet in the next twelve months, figure out a reasonable timeline. You'll want to do that in your first meetings together.

No doubt you will want to meet once a week at first in face-to-face meetings, for about an hour. Typically, that is the most realistic and doable for both mentor and mentee, making it possible to work on all the goals you set together. At first it may take longer than an hour to gather information and to develop the relationship. But meetings that last longer than an hour tend to be unproductive.

After a while, you will likely be able to decrease that frequency. After two or three months—or perhaps you decide it may take six—you suggest, "Let's try meeting every other week. This week we'll meet face-to-face, but next week let's do a phone visit in the same time slot. That way you don't have to travel across town, and we can still check in together." After you do that for a while, you may decide to taper down to touching base three times a month, and then twice a month. As long as you have a natural flow to what you're doing and it aligns with the action plan and the goals you've set, it should be fine.

Of course, you will need to be flexible and willing to change frequency as the situation dictates. You may need to meet more than once a week in the beginning if they just got out of prison, they don't have a place to live, and they have 20 things they have to get done immediately. They're in a very high-risk situation, which would probably dictate meeting face-to-face twice a week for a while and talking on the phone the days you didn't meet in person. Or suppose your mentee is gathering information so you can help them write a resume. You're not going to wait a week to review it and another week before the mentee can start looking for jobs. That would take too much time. Or suppose your mentee is ready to start using drugs again, and they're hanging with the wrong crowd with no one in their life to support them. You'll need to connect more often for a while, even if it's by phone, to provide that support.

### **Define the Method of Meeting**

At first, face-to-face meetings are essential. Only then can you take note of the mentee's body language and mannerisms along with the cues they give you. Are they fidgeting, shaking, or jittery? Are their eyes bloodshot, or do they appear fatigued? Are they calm, or can't they sit still? If you're on the phone merely talking to them, you're using only your ears 100% of the time. There's a lot you can miss. They could be sitting there sipping on a fifth of bourbon while they're talking to you, and you wouldn't be able to tell the difference. Even if it's a video call and they're drinking out of a water bottle, it could be mixed with vodka. You wouldn't know. But in a face-to-face meeting you'd smell that.

Face-to-face meetings are important also because you're able to form bonds with the person you're meeting with more quickly, and it's easier to read the person

you’re with and hold them accountable. After you have built those bonds and the person is showing some self-accountability, you may be able to switch to mixture of face-to-face visits and phone calls. This will be evident when your mentee seems to be on solid ground and on the right track. After a while, meeting together becomes almost an obligation or a formality. You both know what to expect of the other, and mutual trust has been built. At that point, try alternating between one week meeting in person and the next week speaking on the phone. That way you’re still getting the personal contact and social cues you need, yet at the same time, your mentee is moving toward more independence.

A few cautions are in order, however. Remember that it’s hard to read their mood and mindset with only the audio cues and tone of voice you hear on the phone. In addition, a non-face-to-face meeting is easier to disregard than one that is in-person. People don’t feel as bad about canceling a phone call at the last minute because they know you didn’t have to drive across town to meet with them. With phone visits you may experience cancelations which you weren’t experiencing before. Be aware that they may be heading for the door—something you don’t want to happen.

While your conversations will probably get less shocking or revealing as you go along, you’re still going to want to touch on the highlights of what’s going on in your mentee’s recovery. If you notice that suddenly three of the four things you’ve been talking about on a weekly basis get pushed into the background and you’re losing focus of what’s going on in their life, you may need to go back to more personal contact for a while. After all, if they can’t verbalize what’s going on as they talk to you on the phone, how are they going to get a handle on it when they try it on their own?

Eventually, your check-in calls will be suitable to gauge how your mentee is doing. These calls may then taper off in frequency as it is becoming evident that your mentee has “graduated.” Minimal supervision and accountability are needed. Of course, the personal bond you have created will continue even beyond the mentor-mentee relationship. But the formal “check-ins” will taper off and stop.



### **How do you know your mentee has “graduated”?**

When your mentee covers the categories or “bullet points” you agreed to cover in each meeting on their own, they’re probably ready to “graduate.” They’re basically running the meeting by themselves with minimal input and commentary from you. If, however, certain things stop coming up and cease to be discussed, that is a sign they aren’t ready to “graduate” yet. They still need guidance in order to stay accountable.

### Agree on a Meeting Agenda

The last thing you want to do pre-meeting is to agree on a meeting agenda—what you hope to accomplish. You are not merely a buddy who is there to chat with your mentee for an hour. You are a mentor with a spiritual, faith-based purpose. That means you will want to plan to open each meeting with some sort of devotion or Bible study, and a prayer. You may choose a pertinent topic, or you may opt for an in-depth verse-by-verse study that will help you as well as your mentee.

What you do will depend on where your mentee is in their spiritual life. To find out, you will make inquiries into their church life and personal devotional activities. Do they have zero history with Christ? Are they already strong in faith, but struggle in one area or another? Choose something that meets them where they are. Otherwise, just do something that interests you. The WELS Prison Ministry can provide books on just about anything you might want to focus on.

And yes, in your meetings, plan on the fact that there will also be friendly, casual conversation. You are striving to build a friendship and a close spiritual relationship in which you can talk about God, spiritual things, and some very personal issues. You may veer from the agenda at one point or another, but you want to be able to quickly get back on track.

Before meeting formally, you will want to make it clear that this is a faith-based ministry, they will be required to maintain an active faith life, and they will be held accountable to the mutually agreed-upon goals set out in the beginning. They may lament, "I don't really believe in the Jesus stuff and I'm kinda sick of religion. Let's do the 'practical' stuff, though." That's a deal-breaker. It's impossible to do what we need to do without the spiritual and biblical underpinnings.



#### From Prospective Mentee to Mentee

When a prospective mentee is identified, that person is seen as fit for the program and agrees to what the program entails. In most cases they have already filled out an agreement that outlines what is expected in being part of the mentoring program. That is when they are presented to you, and you introduce yourself to them and review what is expected, perhaps referencing the written form. At the very least you will want a verbal agreement that they will abide by the program's requirements. They must understand the biblical, Christian, faith-based foundation of the program.

Before meeting formally, you will also agree that the things discussed in your meetings will remain confidential; only then can trust be built between you and your mentee. You will also want to present some type of written agreement that both of you may sign, stating what will be required of both mentee and mentor. A

suitable form is found in the workbook appendix. It should be used upon intake, even before you begin formally meeting with your mentee.



### What Things Will You Want to Do Before Meeting?

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | DEFINE AND AGREE ON A MEETING TIMELINE.        |
| 2. | DEFINE THE METHOD TO BE USED FOR THE MEETINGS. |
| 3. | AGREE ON A MEETING AGENDA.                     |



### Activity: Pre-Meeting: Create and Implement a Recurring Meeting Schedule.

It's your turn to create and implement a recurring meeting schedule.

**Step One:** It is generally true that meetings will taper off after a certain period of time, usually going from once a week to once every other week, and finally once a month or less. On a sheet of paper, draw two columns. Label one "Pros to Tapering Off Meetings," and the other "Cons to Tapering Off Meetings." Fill in pros and cons in the appropriate column.

**Step Two:** Call or text someone you know on the phone and carry on a typical conversation you would normally have with that person. As soon as you are finished, write down some things you were not able to determine in a phone call that you would have been able to determine in a face-to-face conversation (mood, emotions, smiles or frowns, etc.). How does what you have learned apply to the type of visits you have with your mentee?

**Step Three:** A mentor of mentors commented, "Your mentee is not merely a buddy to chat with for an hour." In other words, in your meetings you intend to accomplish something. On a sheet of paper, outline the general categories of things you hope to accomplish in mentor/mentee meetings.

### Meeting: Conduct a Mentor-Mentee Meeting

As you prepare to conduct the mentor-mentee meeting, you will very likely go through what you want to cover in your mind. It would be advisable to read your notes from the past meeting so they're fresh in your mind. Reviewing what the mentee was supposed to be working on during the intervening week is also important. Without breaking confidentiality, you may need to touch base with another mentor on certain items. You also want to be fresh on names and situations your mentee has brought up in the past. Then you won't have to

embarrass yourself by asking for information they have already provided. You’ll also be able to pick up on it more quickly if your mentee changes stories on something they told you before.

### **Begin with Devotion and Prayer**

At the very least you will want to begin your meeting with a prayer, one that is ex-corde—literally “from the heart.” That way it can be personal and to the points you are covering in your meetings. Ideally you would also include a devotion. One that pertains to something that is on the mentee’s mind would be ideal, or something you’re interested in would also be fitting. If your mentee is struggling with a particular issue at the time, a devotion stressing that topic would be a perfect springboard to what your meeting will be about.



#### **Prison Ministry Resources Abound!**

There are many topics covered in WELS Prison Ministry published materials that make excellent devotional materials. Anger management, a very common issue among mentees, is one of the pertinent topics. There are also materials on addiction, “God’s Great Exchange”—a basic evangelism tool, depression and anxiety, and many more.

WELS Prison Ministry produces many publications that make excellent devotional material. There are also various websites that offer resources. Of course, you will need to be discerning that what you adapt is in keeping with what Scripture teaches. You may simply want to take a section of the Bible you think is appropriate to what your mentee is currently facing. Even a verse-by-verse study of a book of the Bible can work very well.

Of course, you will want to have a Bible study that is in keeping with the spiritual level of understanding of your mentee. Some who are new in the faith or rusty in the faith may benefit most from one of Jesus’ parables—a short story which is something they can wrap their mind around and talk about.

You may want to give your mentee an assignment to review the substance of this devotion or Bible reading before the next meeting. One method of doing this is called the I.V.A. method; it’s particularly helpful in evaluating emotions like anger, depression, or uncertainty. The mentee is told to “Identify” the emotion. Then they’re told to “Validate” that emotion as something that is real and something other children of God have dealt with over the ages. It even shows up in the Bible. The final step is to “Align” that emotion with what Scripture says is the godly way of dealing with it.



### **Bible Time Can Change Your Mentee's Perspective**

When we study Scripture, we gain new perspectives as we come to view things God's way. This is something you want for your mentee. For example, in anger management, most people see anger as a bad thing that always leads to violence and must be suppressed or eliminated. Yet in the Bible we see God in his anger, and even Jesus himself in an angry state as he threw money changers and merchants out of the temple. God is angry with sin (and sinners), and he wants us to be too. Anger is a gift from God, an emotion he has given us. When used properly, it can give us strength to fight the evil that is oppressing us and attacking us in a sinful world.

### **Key Categories to Cover**

There are four key categories to cover in each meeting: faith, family, friends, and struggle. After meeting for a period of time, you will be able to add "goals" to the list of four, as it becomes clear how your mentee is progressing. You may want to actually draw the figure of a hollow cross on a whiteboard or piece of sketch paper. Then you can write the four categories in each of the arms of the cross: "faith" at the top, "family" and "friends" in the side arms, and "struggle" on the bottom.



### **Christ's Cross Is Central**

As you present the four main points to cover in every meeting, try drawing the diagram described above. It will be a reminder that at the focus of your mentee's recovery is the cross of Jesus and the forgiveness he earned through his innocent life, his death for all sin, and his resurrection. It is also a reminder of the crosses Christians carry when they follow Jesus, including the struggles with sin and the sinful flesh they endure each day. Without Jesus, winning in these struggles wouldn't matter.

Why are these four categories so important? Faith is number one for a reason; it is most important. It's very easy for mentees to try to go it alone without God and simply struggle through on their own initiative, "picking themselves up by their own bootstraps." It is very easy to drift into hopelessness that way. Very quickly it can seem as though there's no end in sight, they can feel worthless and firmly believe there's no way they can be forgiven for what they've done. There is much comfort in a God who truly loves them in Christ and promises to be with them all the way.

They may fail in the other points, but if they have their faith in the Savior, they will be saved eternally. But if they have everything else together, yet push the "Jesus stuff" aside because it's not for them, they may become an outstanding citizen and do all the right things outwardly, but they'll be lost eternally. Then



they're no longer a child of God, and that is the biggest concern. You want your discussions about faith to motivate and guide them to that end. They will be developing life-long habits of being able to feed their faith so they grow more and more.

That's why the obligation is built in that they at least go to church if not become a member of a church in Christ. Ask them if they went to church. Ask them what the sermon was about and what they got out of it. What golden thread of truth were they able to pull out of it and carry through their week? Encourage them to get into a Bible Information Class if they aren't in one already.

Family is a topic that should be taken up in each meeting. Which family members are on the scene? Is there a spouse or a significant other? Are there kids, parents, siblings, or extended family that play a significant role in this person's life? They may either be a positive or a negative influence in the life of your mentee, or a little of both. Your mission is to find out which. Are they part of your mentee's support structure so you can count on them to support you and everything you're trying to accomplish? Or is it the opposite?

It may be that your mentee's mom still loves them, and she's their go-to person when things get difficult. But maybe their dad has threatened to deck them next time he sees them. You're going to want to know things like that. Is there an ex who's fighting for custody over a child? Those things are important to delve into even if your mentee may be reluctant to do so.

The fact is, many mentee's have not had a good relationship with family members, and they've burned too many bridges over time. That can lead to depression and anger problems, and to questioning self-worth.



#### **How Are Anger and Depression Related?**

It has been said that depression is just anger pointed inwardly toward oneself. With anger, we're beating up on the outside world and people around us who have hurt us in some way. Depression is a form of beating up on your inner self—anger directed inwardly.

A similar thing is true with friends, another subject that should come up every time. Is your mentee striving to surround themselves with the right friends instead of revisiting the wrong friends? Are the friends your mentee hangs out with a positive influence? Better yet, are they good Christian brothers they can learn from and who can help them develop godly habits? Or has your mentee gone back to hanging out with the people that got them into whatever trouble they got into in the first place? Ask a lot of questions so you can be certain they're being truthful with you.

The fourth "pillar" or point to cover in each meeting is your mentee's struggle. Of course, that could also be "struggles" in the plural. You may need to help them

break down and tackle those struggles one by one, or they will feel overwhelmed. As we've expressed in a previous chapter, that struggle could be one or more addictions, depression, anger management, financial management, or living conditions. The struggle may overlap in problems with family and friends. Many of these struggles are what got your mentee into the situation in which they found themselves, and these struggles are the very things that put them at risk of going back to where they were.

Under the heading "struggles," legal needs is a big topic that needs to be discussed. No doubt your mentee has certain legal requirements that have to be met as conditions of their parole or probation. They may have to attend a certain number of meetings, visit a therapist, or visit their probation officer at certain intervals. They may be required to get tested for drugs or alcohol in their system. Part of your work is to hold them accountable for meeting these legal requirements, and at times that may be a struggle for them. You'll obviously want to talk about that.

As you go through the major points: faith, family, friends, and struggle, at first you may treat them as sort of a checklist as you fill in the "cross chart." After a while, your mentee may guide the conversation and cover those points, sometimes in order, and sometimes not. But watch for what they might be avoiding. Have they gone the whole conversation without mentioning family? Or have they talked on and on without bringing up something you have known to be one of their struggles? They may be trying to avoid the big problem. That's when you can bring it up after they've rattled through the other things on the list.



### **Know the Difference Between Struggles and Goals.**

Struggles are those areas in life and recovery that your mentee is wrestling with on a daily basis. They could be relationships, managing anger, dealing with various addictions, financial issues and the like. Goals are the steps they plan on taking to manage and overcome those struggles. Goals may be both short-term and long-term. It is often best to set long-term goals, and then establish the short-term goals. The short-term goals are the steps that need to be taken along the way to achieving the long-term goals.

There is another topic to be covered along with faith, family, friends, and struggle. It's "goals." This topic may overlap with the others, as goals may entail any and all of the other areas. Remember, you want to have a type of action plan for your mentee to work on. That's where the goals come in. For example, your mentee may be living with family members, but that relationship is deteriorating. That's the struggle. So your mentee's goal that aligns with that struggle is to get their own housing arrangement. An immediate goal may be to expedite that housing situation to alleviate the struggle. If that goal has already been set, you

will want to hold your mentee accountable to it and check on the progress they're making.

Maybe the goal is more long-term than that. Perhaps they're living with their mom, and their mom is fine with that. As far as she's concerned, they don't ever have to leave. But your mentee is 25 years old, and they don't want to live with their mom forever. They've done great saving money for a down payment on an apartment, and their goal is to afford to pay regular rent on the apartment. Perhaps they'd like to do this within six months. You don't necessarily need to ask them every single week, "Did you save the extra \$125 this week for an apartment, because that's your goal?" But periodically you will want to ask how they're doing with this goal in order to hold them accountable to it. At the same time, you're being supportive.

In checking on goals, there will be many times your mentee will meet with failure, and that will certainly test your patience. But, as with disciplining children, you don't need to scream at your mentee and verbally beat them up for what they did or failed to do. You will, however, want to tell them what they did was wrong. And you can offer some suggestions (or ask them for their own suggestions) as to how to get back on track. If your mentee blew it and went out on a weekend bender, you might ask, "Do you regret it? Do you have a plan for how to react differently in the future?" Your mentee knows it's not right, it shouldn't have happened, and we expect it not to happen. But you don't want to beat them up verbally over their failure.

It wouldn't hurt to sandwich this correction between statements of praise and encouragement for things that have gone well. Praise, encouragement, and gospel motivation are things you want to bring into your meetings. You ask questions about their struggles, check on their goals, and get a feel for how your mentee is doing. Then you offer praise and encouragement accordingly. If they say they've had a rough week so they took up running, something they now enjoy, you would praise and encourage them. You might say, "That's awesome! You took all that energy you had from your anger and put it into moving your feet on the pavement. That's great."



#### **Can You Say, "Cognitive Dissonance"?**

In offering praise or encouragement, make sure it fits. If your mentee doesn't feel the praise fits the situation, it could result in what is known as "cognitive dissonance."

For example, if a parent says to their son, "Hey, I heard you scored a goal in the soccer game; that's great," and the son says, "Yeah, but I scored it for the wrong team," there's a cognitive dissonance. For this reason, in offering praise, a one sentence intervention or a neutral statement is best to start with.

The above conversation would then go something like this: "Hey, son, I noticed you had a soccer game today. How'd it go?" If the son says it was great, the parent would offer praise. If, however, he admits to struggling with something, the parent would then offer encouragement. If he says the game was just "fine," the parent would probably do best to let the matter rest. Much the same is true in offering praise and encouragement to mentees.

Of course, you will want to meet your mentee's failures at meeting their goals with patience and understanding. Talk about what went wrong and have the mentee provide the next steps they're going to take so it doesn't happen again. They may need to redefine and reevaluate goals. Meanwhile, you can provide options for resources you could share to help them meet those goals. Review those goals with your mentee, praising the ones that are good and calling attention to the ones that need to be worked on. For example, if they make it a goal to avoid the liquor stores on a certain street by walking down another street instead, praise them, even if what they propose merely seems like common sense to you.

What if they meet many of their goals, go down the right street, and end up going on a bender anyway? If they come to you dejected and regretting what they did because, in spite of everything they did right they still messed up, you certainly can agree that they messed up. But take the opportunity to point out what they did right. And acknowledge that the fact that they feel regret for what went wrong is a good and positive thing. Use that opportunity to lead them back to Christ with his open arms of forgiveness in his cross. After a failure, it's common for human beings to feel worthless—that there's no way to be forgiven for what they've done. Only Christ and his forgiveness can erase that guilt and dejection.

### **Close with Prayer**

Everything begins and ends with God. The same is true of your meetings with your mentee. Bring in current struggles and concerns your mentee is having, thank God for blessings and successes, and ask God to strengthen them in areas they need to do better. You might have the mentee chime in with requests and concerns and then conclude the prayer in an appropriate way. Work toward the goal of having the mentee lead the prayer themselves. This will not only help them focus on their relationship with their heavenly Father; it will also help them in developing their own personal prayer life.



## How Do You Go About Conducting a Mentor-Mentee Meeting?

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. | BEGIN WITH A DEVOTION AND PRAYER.                                      |
| 2. | COVER THE KEY CATEGORIES: FAITH, FAMILY, FRIENDS, STRUGGLE, AND GOALS. |
| 3. | CLOSE WITH PRAYER.   |



### Activity: Conducting a Mentor-Mentee Meeting

It's your turn to conduct a mentor-mentee meeting.

**Step One:** You are about to have your first formal meeting with a mentee. Understanding you are only just getting to know the mentee, choose or write an appropriate devotion including a prayer to open your meeting.

**Step Two:** Draw a large page-sized box-cross (as indicated in the lesson) and fill in the appropriate key categories you will cover in each meeting. In the space you would use to take meeting notes, write a brief explanation of each category.

**Step Three:** Write an appropriate prayer to close a meeting. Remember you are sending off your mentee to a week of contending for their goals in faith. Then pray a similar prayer for yourself, adapting some of the same points to your own faith, struggles, and goals.

### Post Meeting: Recap and Documentation

After meeting with a mentee, you may be inclined to take a deep breath, relieved that it went well, and settle into whatever it is you do to unwind and relax. There is a time for that. But not now. After meeting with a mentee, there are certain steps you will want to take that will make future meetings with your mentee go more smoothly and will enable you to help them meet their goals more readily.

In order to remember important details, you may be tempted to take notes during your meeting. If you do, keep your writing to a bare minimum so you can continue to listen to what is being said. Ask their permission to take a few notes during your meeting. However, most of what you retain from your meeting will be from memory and what you write down afterward. For this reason, it's better to make detailed notations as soon as possible after the meeting. Do it while your

memory is still fresh. It will help to briefly run through the outline—faith, friends, struggle, goals—as a framework.



### What a Recap Might Look Like

It might go something like this:

“In general: They’ve been out of prison for three weeks now. Seems kind of defeated. Doesn’t talk very much.”

“Faith—not really into this church thing right now”

“Family—Things seem okay with their mom, but doesn’t speak very much of anyone else. Not sure about siblings; find that out at next meeting.”

“Struggle—They’re not very motivated to find a job; living like a ‘bump on a log.’”

Just as important as taking some notes on your meeting is what you do with them afterward. You want to put them in an accessible place so that you can make use of them before your next meeting to refresh your memory. You don't want to be rummaging around through stacks of paper or last week's junk mail just to find important information you need for your next meeting.

However, you also need to keep your notes in a secure place where no one else has access to your them. Confidentiality is a very important aspect of your relationship with your mentee. After a while, those notes may include things like, “They’re suffering from depression. They’re struggling with pornography. It’s wrecking their marriage and causing them to plunge back into a spiral of drinking and drug abuse.”

Those are very personal issues. Leaving your notes on the kitchen counter for your spouse and children to read would not respect the confidentiality it is paramount that you maintain. Some mentoring programs make available an online portal for entering “case notes.” Such portals are both accessible and secure. It’s great to be able to look back and see, “Now, what was their mom’s name again? Oh yeah, Sally.” Or, “How long have they been waiting to hear about that job? Oh yes, it was three weeks now.” You can see whether or not they’ve made progress in the last three or six months by comparing what you wrote then with what’s happening now.

There are times you may desire to discuss certain aspects of a case with another mentor. Sometimes there are difficult situations and questions which are better discussed with others, especially with someone who has more experience. Even then, confidentiality should be maintained, respecting the identity of your mentee. Avoid putting confidential information into group emails, or emails in general. If

it's an emergency situation and you have to use texts or emails, use minimal identifying information.

While mentors usually are not bound legally by the same laws that bind psychologists and other professionals, someone could still try to pursue legal action if confidentiality is breached. Avoid any risk of this by acting as if you ARE legally bound to confidentiality. Besides, doing so goes a long way in maintaining a healthy mentor-mentee relationship. It shows you can be trusted!



### **Every Mentor Needs a Mentor**

It's important to have someone you can vent to and bounce things off of, someone who can give you encouragement and hold you accountable. It can be another more experienced mentor or someone else you look up to spiritually who can mentor you. At the very least, it could be a pastor or a trusted elder in your church. Not only can you turn to this person for advice when it comes to mentoring, but it is someone who can help you with your own struggles and goals and keep pointing you to the Savior's love. They'll be honest with you even if it's not something you want to hear. Above all, if you're saying or doing something harmful in your mentoring, they will tell you so you can grow and improve. If you become frustrated or depressed because a mentee seems to be ignoring your good advice, a mentor can give you encouragement and words of wisdom.

It's very wise to share with another mentor or another person who is involved with your program in general terms what you are doing. Potentially, you could be meeting with a violent offender who might be set off by something said in the course of a meeting. However remote, it's possible for you to go off to a mentor meeting and not come back. You would want someone to know where you were going, whom you were meeting, and how long you planned to be there. It's possible to share such information without divulging confidence.

You can try to cover every base and anticipate every potential problem, but there will always be situations and challenges for which you couldn't possibly have planned. Sometimes you just have to "wing it." That's not bad. You don't want to come in unprepared with no plan and no goals to pursue. That would be irresponsible. However, to think that you can plan for everything is naïve. That's where prayer and trust in God come in. He is the ultimate counselor who promises to be with you and guide you. You don't have to fear situations you haven't planned for.



### Post Meeting: Recap and Documentation

1. MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY.
2. DOCUMENT THE MEETING.
3. RECAP WITH APPROPRIATE RESOURCES.



### Activity: Post Meeting: Recap and Documentation

It's your turn to recap and document your meeting.

**Step One:** Do some quick online research of what your state laws say regarding confidentiality between patients or clients and professionals. What are ways for you to maintain the confidence of your mentees?

**Step Two:** Write down a brief four-part framework in which you might document the activities of a mentor-mentee meeting. What types of things might you record under each heading?

**Step Three:** Write down at least five benefits that might come from having a mentor even though you yourself are a mentor. Name three possible individuals who might serve as your mentor.





## Your Turn to Run a Meeting with a Mentee

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### Review and Exercises

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

### Pre Meeting: Create and Implement a Recurring Meeting Schedule

**Step One:** It is generally true that meetings will taper off after a certain period of time, usually going from once a week to once every other week, and finally once a month or less. On a sheet of paper, draw two columns. Label one "Pros to Tapering Off Meetings," and the other "Cons to Tapering Off Meetings." Fill in pros and cons in the appropriate column.

**Step Two:** Call or text someone you know on the phone and carry on a typical conversation you would normally have with that person. As soon as you are finished, write down some things you were not able to determine in a phone call that you would have been able to determine in a face-to-face conversation (mood, emotions, smiles or frowns, etc.). How does what you have learned apply to the type of visits you have with your mentee?

**Step Three:** A mentor of mentors commented, "Your mentee is not merely a buddy to chat with for an hour." In other words, in your meetings you intend to accomplish something. On a sheet of paper, outline the general categories of things you hope to accomplish in mentor/mentee meetings.

### Meeting: Conduct a Mentor-Mentee Meeting

**Step One:** You are about to have your first formal meeting with a mentee. Understanding you are only just getting to know the mentee, choose or write an appropriate devotion including a prayer to open your meeting.

**Step Two:** Draw a large page-sized box-cross (as indicated in the lesson) and fill in the appropriate key categories you will cover in each meeting. In the space you would use to take meeting notes, write a brief explanation of each category.

**Step Three:** Write an appropriate prayer to close a meeting. Remember you are sending off your mentee to a week of contending for their goals in faith. Then pray a similar prayer for yourself, adapting some of the same points to your own faith, struggles, and goals.

### Post Meeting: Recap and Document the Meeting

**Step One:** Do some quick online research of what your state laws say regarding confidentiality between patients or clients and professionals. What are ways for you to maintain the confidence of your mentees?

Step Two: Write down a brief four-part framework in which you might document the activities of a mentor-mentee meeting. What types of things might you record under each heading?

Step Three: Write down at least five benefits that might come from having a mentor even though you yourself are a mentor. Name three possible individuals who might serve as your mentor.



## Lesson 6: Hold the Mentee and Mentor Relationship Accountable



### A Spiral to Success

You've learned about your mentee in a general way. You've listened to them, you're building on the relationship you have established with them, and you're following an action plan that you both agree on. You're meeting at various intervals to assess where they are, how it's going, to encourage them, and help them through their action plan.

In connection with all of this, one ingredient is essential to ensure your mentee's success. Accountability. Without it, your mentee is liable to coast off in any number of different directions that are not the right direction they really want to pursue.

Rather than thinking of your journey with your mentee as a straight line projecting into the future, think of it as a loop or a spiral. Your meetings and encouragement move them onward and upward in their action plan, but you're covering many of the same aspects and building blocks of their recovery over and over again. You keep asking questions, and your mentee keeps opening up to you. The more you learn, the deeper you're able to dig and the more you're able to help your mentee. Otherwise, instead of a cycle, you're letting the mentee go off in one direction or another, unaware of whether they're on track or not. Cycling

back to their goals and action plan, where they have succeeded and where they have failed will help them toward success and self-accountability.

Holding yourself and the mentee accountable shows you care about the mentee and their success. If you're not holding them accountable when they mess up and act as if it's no big deal, you're saying you don't really care about them and how things turn out for them. When you push back at them and hold them accountable, it's because you want them to reach their goals and to get where they want to be.



### How to Hold the Mentee and Mentor Relationship Accountable

1. HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE TO DO WHAT YOU SAID YOU'D DO FOR THE MENTEE.
2. HOLD THE MENTEE ACCOUNTABLE WITH LEGAL ISSUES, THEIR STRUGGLE, AND THEIR ACTION PLAN.
3. TIE THE ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE MENTEE'S FAITH.

### Hold Yourself Accountable to Do What You Said You'd Do for the Mentee

Accountability is not just for your mentee. It is a two-way street, something that's important for you too. It's extremely important that you hold yourself accountable to your part of their action plan, or you are bound to let down your mentee in one way or another. This will jeopardize their trust in you as their mentor and call into question your reliability for help.

Accountability means you're holding yourself responsible to do the things you said you'd do for your mentee. If you're not able to help them in the ways you said you would, you're not going to build trust. You may even come across as the same as everybody else, trying to help and saying they will do this or that, but in the end, proving to be all talk and no action.

If you don't hold yourself accountable, the worst is that not only could you be considered fake, God could become discredited in the process. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "... You, then, who teaches others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Romans 2:21-24). Not doing what you promise will reveal you as being two-faced, while being a poor reflection of God who, through Christ, always keeps his promises.

As a mentor, by definition, you are striving to be a Christian example for your mentee. Often lacking strong and loving parents, your mentees could even see you as a parental figure. Therefore, you will want to be there to encourage them, guide them, and, when they feel they can't do it themselves, you can point them to God and teach them how to pray by your own prayers with and for them. Through you, God can say to this person, "I'm real. I know you, I love you, and I want what's best for you." Being accountable shows you care, and it shows God cares.

### **Your Time Commitment Is Important**

The first area of accountability is the use of your time. It will take time to do what you're doing, and that is time you're not spending at work or with your spouse, family, or hobbies. If you can't commit a decent amount of time to your mentor-mentee relationship, you might want to reconsider taking on the role. You can still be a friend, and you can certainly lend your encouragement to their struggle, but being a mentor may not be for you at this stage of life if you can't put in the time.

Being a mentor takes time because it means being available, often even between scheduled calls and meetings. Putting up a wall or being unavailable at crucial times will signal to your mentee that you're not trustworthy, because you're not able to be there for them. That's why accountability begins with devoting your time to your mentor-mentee relationship.



#### **Know Yourself**

Know yourself and your own situation. Is your job demanding increased hours from you? Are you going through relationship issues with your spouse or significant other because you're spending too much time with your mentee? Is the balance in your own life off at this point in time? That's fine. There are different options to serve others rather than being a mentor. If you're able to commit the extra time it takes to be a mentor, that's great. But devote the time you intended to devote. If your situation changes, you can always take a step back and reconsider before you do it again.

### **Confidentiality Is Vital**

It's important to keep in confidence what your mentee tells you because it is not intended for other ears to hear—only yours. They're trusting you with this information, and to leak it to other people betrays that trust. Keeping it to yourself is part of holding yourself accountable. You don't need to have a written agreement to bind you to confidentiality. But it is certainly worth talking about in your initial meeting with your mentee. You want them to be able to trust you with information, and the assurance of confidentiality can go a long way in building that trust.

Even if you go to others for advice or their opinions on something you're dealing with, be careful about how much information you reveal and how you reveal it. Remember, it's your mentee's story to tell, not yours. Be sure that others will not be able to recognize who it is you're talking about so that confidentiality is breached. One important exception would be where the law requires the reporting of infractions, as in the case of the sexual abuse of children.



### **No Cover Ups with Drugs!**

In holding mentees accountable in their struggles and action plans, especially pertaining to drug abuse, it's important to make it clear that as mentees, we will turn them in if they're using drugs, possessing drugs, or selling drugs. We cannot hide what's going on or cover for the mentee. Make it clear that you will go to the police station with the mentee as they turn themselves in. We are not psychiatrists, doctors, or lawyers who have professional privileges.

### **Tasks You Agreed You Would Do**

Another area in which you will want to hold yourself accountable is taking care of the tasks you agreed you would do. If you agree to a meeting or a call at a certain time, be available at that time. If you agreed to help your mentee on part of a test they're preparing for, then help them as you promised. To you, one thing or another may not seem to be that important. "So what if I'm a little late?" But to your mentee it could be very important. For example, you promise to pick them up to take them to get their driver's license. They prepare their paperwork and the things necessary to obtain the license; you promise to get them there. What if you're late or you don't show? You're saying, "It's no big deal. There's always another time." But to your mentee, it IS a big deal. They need that government-issued ID in order to work. And there are a host of other things that revolve around that license, including the ability to drive legally.



### **Mentors Need a Break**

After a year, it's probably a good idea for mentors to take a break. In general, this is the time it will take to guide a mentee to relative stability and self-improvement. While each mentee is different with different needs, most attainable goals can be approached within this timeframe. After helping a mentee to meet attainable goals, it's wise for mentors to take a break before starting to work with another mentee.

Holding yourself accountable means that you realize that this is important to your mentee, and so you follow through with what you agreed to. Don't volunteer to do



something you feel you can't carry out. If you're not sure, say that, and check out what you need ahead of time. Then communicate with them one way or another so they know whether or not you can help. Don't promise results you can't promise!

**Reminder: A Mentor for the Mentor**

As mentioned in the previous Lesson, it's a good idea for you, as a mentor, to have a mentor for yourself. It could be a fellow mentor, someone with experience in ministering to those behind bars and to those being released from prison, a pastor, or another mature Christian. Such a mentor could offer you encouragement and advice, be a sounding board when you become frustrated, and keep you accountable in fulfilling your obligations as a mentor. Even a spouse could fulfill this role by making sure your life is not out of balance, causing you to miss appointments and short-change others to whom you are obligated.



### **Activity: Hold Yourself Accountable to Do What You Said You'd Do for the Mentee.**

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It's your turn to hold yourself accountable to do what you said you'd do for the mentee.

**Step One:** Gauge your activities for a week, keeping track of how much time you spend working, with family, at hobbies, relaxing, sleeping, etc. How much "expendable" time do you have in the course of a week? How much time would you have to devote to mentoring? Speak with someone who has done mentoring. Is this enough time?

**Step Two:** Suppose you're writing in a diary. Write down a time when someone you trusted broke your confidence. What were the ramifications? In what way did it affect how others viewed you? How did it make you feel? What lesson is there in this for treating your mentees in confidence?

**Step Three:** Write down three promises you have made to other people during the past week. It could be things you said you'd accomplish at work, chores you said you'd get done at home, or promises you made to your children or other family members. How did you do at carrying out these promises? Are you working on the ones not yet fulfilled? What are the consequences of not keeping promises you made? What lesson is there in all of this in keeping promises to your mentee?

## **Hold the Mentee Accountable for Legal Issues, Their Struggle, and Their Action Plan**

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Of course, beyond holding yourself accountable, your responsibility as a mentor is to hold your mentee accountable for what they need to accomplish their goals. While there are many items which you will want to make sure they follow through on, in general we can put them into three categories: legal issues, their struggle, and their action plan. If you can keep them on track with these, you will probably help them stay on track to recovery and a successful return to society.

### **Legal Issues Loom Large**

Legal issues are surely among the most important areas in which mentees need to be held accountable. If they don't fulfill the legal responsibilities which are part of their release or parole, they will end up in trouble with the law again, and possibly re-incarcerated—the opposite of the outcome we want to see.

You're going to need to find out from your mentee exactly what those legal obligations are. If they're a sex offender, what things do you need to know? Are there any specific areas they have to stay away from? Are there any other kinds of criteria that you need to consider? Are they attending church? Is that a problem if children are present? Do they have to sit upstairs or sit in the back to avoid contact? Can there be any children around at all, and if so, is there an age requirement?

Or, perhaps they were under a DUI conviction and they have a breathalyzer in their car. You need to fully understand what they have to do. Every time they start the car they need to use this device, and it takes a certain amount of time to do this. Are they allowed to travel anywhere in the country or anywhere in the state? Is there a specific timeframe in which they are allowed to travel? These are just some examples of legal requirements you will want to know as you first get to know your mentee. Only if you know them can you hold your mentee accountable to them.

### **Meet with the Mentee's Parole Officer (Or Probation Officer)**

Of those legal obligations, your mentee's relationship with their parole officer or probation officer will likely be one of the most important. Tell your mentee upfront right at the beginning that you're going to want to meet with their parole or probation officer. It's not because you don't trust them, Rather, it's because you want to be on the same page to help them fulfill all their legal requirements successfully.

By meeting with the probation officer, you get the full spectrum of information "right from the horse's mouth." In addition, it helps the mentee indirectly because it's another person working on the same page as sort of a support system to help them make it on the outside.

You will want to schedule the first meeting with this officer as soon as you can after meeting with your mentee. Much will depend on the schedule of the officer himself. How often mentees are required to meet with the parole officer will vary. If they're fresh out of prison, it may be every month, or perhaps even every other week. Later on it could be every three months, or perhaps even every six months. Whenever their next meeting with this officer takes place, make it known that you want to be in on the meeting. You will want to meet with the parole officer at least once, early on. After that, you will want to ensure that your mentee follows through with the meetings they are required to attend.

You can make it clear that you will not go back to the parole officer every time the mentee takes a drink when they're not supposed to, or if they went to a party last week. But if the mentee is getting drunk repeatedly and is out driving drunk or driving without a license, that is something different. It would not be beneficial to the mentee in the long run to cover up obvious law violations. The probation officer will have to be involved, and hopefully the mentee will agree to tell him or her. If the mentee is working on anger management and it comes out that they beat up their spouse, assault and battery is a legal issue that must be reported to the authorities. You can go together to get the job done, but it needs to be done.



### What Are Some Advantages to Meeting with the Mentee's Parole or Probation Officer?

1. YOU GET INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR MENTEE "FROM THE SOURCE."
2. IT IS ANOTHER SOURCE OF SUPPORT WORKING ON A "TEAM."
3. YOU CAN LEARN THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS YOUR MENTEE IS EXPECTED TO MEET.

### Ask Hard Questions

Holding your mentee accountable means that at times you're going to need to ask some hard questions. Sometimes these questions will be very personal. Only after you've grown with them and established a relationship will you be able to comfortably ask some of them.

Others will be pointed, but necessary to make sure they are doing what they need to do to fulfill requirements. For example, they're supposed to use a breathalyzer every time they get into their car. A pointed question you may need to ask is, "Have you been driving anybody else's car?" It's a yes or no question. If the

answer is "yes," your mentee may not just be driving someone else's car, but they may be getting drunk and driving at the same time.

Once you get to know your mentee well, you'll be able to tell if their answers are truthful or not. If the pause before the answer is too long, you'll know. If the answer comes too quickly, you may also know something's up. Some answers just may not seem natural or logical. Dig deeper into the situation. If it's the car situation, you might ask, "So it kind of sounds like you're driving other people's cars, is that right? And why is this the case? Does yours not work?" Ultimately, you want to find out if they've been drinking. If one of their legal requirements is that they have no alcohol or drugs in their system for a year, three years, or whatever it is, you need to hold them to that. You may have to ask them, "What do you have to do to stop that so it doesn't happen again? Maybe you shouldn't be hanging out with that guy anymore."

These are hard questions, because you don't want to be thinking the worst about someone and you don't want your mentee to believe you're thinking the worst about them. But the questions simply serve to bring out the truth. And the truth is necessary in order to help them get to where they want to be. So there will be hard questions. You agreed to those as part of the mentor-mentee relationship, and being a friend requires that you ask them. They are bound to come up with every meeting in one form or another. You'll feel better about asking them the better you know your mentee, but they'll never be easy. And based on your mentee's answers, you will either want to dig deeper or let it go if it sounds like they're doing alright.

### **Know the Mentee's Legal Requirements**

In meeting with the parole officer or probation officer and in asking your mentee the hard questions, you will want to understand the requirements your mentee has to meet. Then when you're helping them build out their action plan, you can do that in a way that encompasses all these requirements. You can help them tailor a plan that is just for them. You can suggest community service or doing things at church, especially if you know those things will help them meet their parole requirements. The information you get from a parole or probation officer can answer a lot of questions as you move forward in helping your mentee.

In understanding the legal requirements they're bound to, you may discover that some of the things you wanted to suggest for them won't work because they violate some of those requirements. For example, suppose you let your mentee drive your vehicle to do something for the church, but it doesn't have a breathalyzer. What happens if they get pulled over for something, and there is no breathalyzer in the car? They will get into trouble with the law and be in violation of their parole because you let them drive the vehicle you did.

Or, what if your mentee is a sex offender, and you suggest to them that you go bowling? There in the next lane a birthday party is going on with several young children. What if the parole officer walks in, or the police officer recognizes them? They're in trouble, and you helped bring it about!

What if a requirement of parole is that your mentee has a job? They get a job laying carpeting in people's houses. Another requirement of parole is that they not carry any weapons. But to do their job, they need to have a carpet knife on them to cut carpeting. If found out, they would be in violation of their parole. Being clear about legal requirements can prevent situations like these.

### **Hold the Mentee Accountable to the Straight and Narrow**

In this case, "the straight and narrow" is referring to the mentee's legal requirements. Once you know what those requirements are by asking the hard questions we were talking about, you can hold the mentee accountable to those requirements.

For example, if they got a DUI and had their driver's license suspended, they're not allowed to drive. Are they driving anyway? Lots of people are driving around on a suspended license. Your mentee may even use that as an excuse to do the same. But that's not following the "straight and narrow" legally. That means following all the legal restraints put on them, even if it seems petty and unnecessary.

### **Know Their Struggles and Pitfalls**

Before you can hold your mentee accountable in the struggles and pitfalls they face in life, you have to know what those are. As you get to know your mentee and follow through with the categories of each meeting, you will get to know their struggles. You will be able to get more specific with each struggle and see how your mentee's struggles are similar to what others have gone through, yet unique to them.

If you know that your mentee struggles with alcoholism, you'll want to ask whether or not there are specific days or times that they're more apt to drink, or certain situations in which they're more tempted to drink. Ask him, "What goes through your mind when you're driving by a bar? Is your drinking more of a nighttime thing, or is it more of an anytime thing?"



#### **"Roots"**

You want to try to understand the root of why mentees are where they are and to see where their temptations start. You know that there are a lot of steps someone who is addicted has to take before they get to a certain spot. So you want to know what their thought process is so you can help and encourage them.

In the case of drinking, it could be a Friday night after they just got their paycheck. They’re going to the bar, and they’re not leaving until it closes. If they’ve got any money left, on Saturday night they’ll be burning that up too. You know you’ve got to help them come up with a different plan for Friday and Saturday nights that doesn’t include drinking. Maybe it’s bowling, a concert, or a bicycle trip—anything that doesn’t involve drinking. They need to avoid the temptation.

### **Hold Them Accountable to the Straight and Narrow—Their Action Plan.**

This time “the straight and narrow” refers to the mentee’s struggles. Once you know what their struggles are, and what the “triggers” for those struggles are, you can help them develop a plan to avoid them. Then it’s a matter of holding them accountable to that plan and keeping them on “the straight and narrow” with their struggles, just as you’re doing with their legal restrictions.

One thing you’ll want to do is probe what they go through and how they feel when they DON’T stay on the straight and narrow. Tell them to walk you through their thought process and how they feel when they drink again and wake up after a bender. Get them to relate how they did this or that or how they can’t remember this or that. Or if pornography is their struggle, ask them how they feel after spending all those hours on their computer or phone. Find out how they feel towards their Savior, about forgiveness, and regarding guilt. As a mentor, you want to help them back to the straight and narrow, recognizing and admitting their sin, and pointing them back to Christ and his forgiveness.



#### **Varied Struggles, Various Helps**

It might seem as if it would be nice to have a step-by-step process to guide our mentees through each and every different struggle they face. But mentees and their struggles are so varied that this kind of comprehensive guide would be almost impossible to produce. However, there are many resources available in libraries and online that deal with many kinds of struggles. Knowing your mentee’s struggles is one step you can take. Seeking out materials and information specific to your mentee’s struggles is another step you can take.

Ultimately, you want to hold them accountable to the straight and narrow so that they’re able to hold themselves accountable to the straight and narrow. You want to get them to the point that, even without you saying anything, they admit, “I sure messed up. I know I’m not supposed to go to the bar on Friday and throw away my paycheck.”

They’re holding themselves accountable when they bring up issues like that themselves without you having to drag it out of them. You can take it a step

farther. It's not that you want to pour salt in their wounds, but it will pay at that point to ask them, "How did you feel Saturday morning? Like garbage, right? You were going to go golfing all morning, and you slept in because you felt terrible. You were also going to go out on Saturday and buy something, and now you have no money left. How do you feel?" You are reinforcing their own accountability so they realize more and more that their actions were wrong, and their actions also have repercussions.

In a way, it's like what you do when you raise children. At first you have to tell them every time to walk and not run across the street without looking. You have to remind them over and over again to wear their helmet when they ride their bike. When you go out and see the bike gone but the helmet in the garage, you call them on it and perhaps suspend bike riding for a while. Next time they'll probably remember. As time goes on, the reminders should be less and less because they're holding themselves accountable. You can't be with them wherever they go. They have to learn to take care of themselves.

Much the same is true for mentees when it comes to their struggles and action plans. You call it when you see it or hear it, and eventually, the mentee will simply do it because they realize if they don't, you'll call them out on it in the next visit. Finally, staying on the straight and narrow and following the action plan will get to be something they do automatically.



### **The Christian Life: Being and Becoming**

The process of moving from you holding the mentee accountable to the mentee holding themselves accountable is a gradual one. It will also vary from mentee to mentee. But we're in the realm of sanctification: living the godly life God wants to see as a fruit of faith in Jesus. This is also a gradual process for every Christian. We are always "being" and "becoming" at the same time. That is, through faith in Christ, God sees us as perfectly holy. But the holy life we strive to live as a result of this is a process that will continue until the day God calls us to perfect holiness in heaven.

As you work with your mentee, it might help to have them view their actions and choices as forks in the road of their life. Get them to pause at the fork in the road and ask themselves, "What happens if I go this way and what will happen if I go that way?" In this way they can evaluate their actions and choices, anticipating the consequences of each. As they stand at these "stop signs" in life and evaluate, you are basically retraining their brain to act accountability.

When they make the right decisions, celebrate those decisions with them. When they take the wrong fork in the road, help them to evaluate what went wrong, seek God's forgiveness in Christ, and move on. Now they know for next time; that's how they grow in accountability!



### Ask Hard Questions

Getting the mentee to self-accountability is something that entails asking hard questions. Just as you asked those questions pertaining to legal matters, you will need to ask them regarding the mentee's struggles and their faithfulness to an action plan. Depending on the struggle, you'll need to ask questions like, "How is your relationship with your spouse? With your kids? By the way, how's your sex life? How's it going with your employer? Are you saving enough money? Do you have enough money?"

Those are just a few examples. They're correlated to the mentee's particular struggles, and to their specific action plan. Based on the mentee's answers to the hard questions, you can determine whether or not they're following their action plan. You might have to come right out and ask, "Why aren't you following your action plan?"

Find out what challenges are lying in the way and help them around those challenges. Sometimes the answer will simply be, "I didn't do it because I didn't want to." Other times they'll say, "I didn't do it because of what this person did, or because of what that person said," blaming everyone but themselves. Then help them with that. Show them it's their own responsibility to act, and not the other person. In doing this, you're keeping them accountable with their struggles and action plan by asking hard questions.



#### **Listen, Then Listen Some More**

In holding your mentee accountable in their struggles and action plan, especially as you ask the hard questions, listen carefully. They will give you valuable information that will help you move them ahead on their action plan. You will hear where they are succeeding and where they are not, where they are holding themselves accountable, and where you still need to hold them accountable. See Lesson 2, Converse and Listen.



## **Activity: Hold the Mentee Accountable with Legal Issues, Their Struggle, and Their Action Plan.**

It's your turn to hold the mentee accountable with legal issues, their struggle, and their action plan.

**Step One:** Suppose you are at an initial meeting with your mentee and their parole or probation officer. Write down five questions you would want to have answers to.

**Step Two:** Your mentee is struggling with the abuse of alcohol, which in the past has led to angry outbursts and some domestic violence. This, in turn, has led to bouts with depression which, in turn, leads to more drinking and angry outbursts. Do some online reading and research in order to help your mentee. Write down four facts or aspects about their struggle you didn't know before which might help you hold them accountable with their struggle.

**Step Three:** Think of a time you have come or will come to a fork in the road in your life. As you stand at the "stop sign" in front of this fork, what were or what are the consequences of taking each way? Is one way right or wrong, or is it simply a matter of one being better? How might your experience with such choices help you hold your mentee accountable to his action plan?

## **Tie the Accountability to the Mentee's Faith**

You could accomplish holding your mentee accountable to their legal requirements, their struggles, and their action plan by merely finding out where they're still failing, reminding them of the ramifications of that, and encouraging them to do better. But something would be lacking. Like your life, theirs is a life that is a gift from God, one being lived before God as a thank offering for forgiveness and new life in Jesus Christ. That makes a difference in how you will approach holding your mentee accountable. There's an overriding reason for doing the right thing beyond, "you'll be better off in the end." Ultimately, it's a matter of eternal consequence. Therefore, you will want to tie accountability to the mentee's faith.



### **Fruits of Faith**

Jesus said, "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:16, 17). It's not like the neighbor who, hearing the man next door complaining about an apple tree that did not bear apples, bought a bag of apples from the store and fastened them onto the tree as a practical joke. The fruits Jesus is talking about flow from faith in him that is nurtured by the gospel in Word and Sacrament. They are a natural outpouring of faith in Christ in the heart.

### **Take Them to the Gospel**

When we think of holding someone accountable, we usually think of stating their responsibilities and obligations. We think of pointing out to them where they have not met those responsibilities or lived up to those obligations. Yes, it is true that this is all part of holding a mentee accountable.

Yet, holding the mentee accountable and tying their faith to that accountability means taking them back to the gospel again and again. As those who have violated the law and paid a civil penalty for doing so, mentees will likely be painfully aware that they have also violated God's law. To believe that God has forgiven them because of the innocent life and blood of Jesus Christ may be a struggle in and of itself.

Realizing who they are in Christ—a new creation, a child of God, a forgiven sinner, yes, even a saint—is important if they are to live out this new identity. But realizing this, and truly believing this, is the best motivator to joyfully serve God and remain accountable to him. Such motivation, empowered by the working of the Holy Spirit in the gospel, comes from within. The Christian truths penetrate the intellect, warm the heart with faith, and affect the mentee's will or desire to do what is right in God's eyes.

### **Remind Them of Who and What They Were**

In reminding believers of their new status as God's forgiven children, the apostle Paul often reminded them of who and what they were before Christ entered their lives. He told the Corinthian Christians, "Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9b-11).

You will want to do a similar thing with your mentee. Remind them how they were in shelters, in the gutter, going from drink to drink and relationship to relationship. Have them recall how empty and useless they felt. Show them how

God rescued them from that dead-end street, even if it was via the way of jail or prison. Bring them to a thankfulness before God for the change he has brought about in their life—a change that began with the attitude of their heart.

Remembering where and how they were before can be a great incentive to not go back there. It can be the centerpiece of their prayers, thanking God for the success he has brought about, and asking God to keep them faithful to their new life and action plan.



### **From Informational Faith to Transformational Faith**

Informational faith is when someone knows the truths and facts of Scripture, much as we might learn in a confirmation class or Bible information class. It might even involve knowing key Bible passages and Luther's Small Catechism from memory. But we want mentees to get to a "transformational faith," that is, a living faith that goes beyond just head knowledge to where a relationship with Jesus is a matter of the heart. Only then can our faith in Jesus and his forgiveness affect the mentee's attitude and actions.

### **Encourage Them in Their Sanctification**

Your encouragement will have to take its cue from what's going on in their life and recovery. If they slip up or fail in carrying out their action plan, you will certainly want to point that out if they haven't done so themselves. Is there remorse? If not, you may need to help them see the seriousness of what they have done and that it is not only a setback in getting to where they want to be, but they have also gone against their loving God.

Once there is remorse, you have the privilege of going back to the Savior's gospel again and reminding them of how his blood purifies them from every single sin. It's as if the infraction never happened. Go over God's promises again and again and be sure they realize there's forgiveness when they fall short.

### **Name Three Things You Can Do to Tie Accountability to the Mentee's Faith in Christ.**

1. TAKE THEM TO THE GOSPEL.
2. REMIND THEM OF WHO AND WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE.
3. ENCOURAGE THEM IN THEIR SANCTIFICATION.



### Activity: Tie the Accountability to the Mentee's Faith

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It's your turn to tie the accountability to the mentee's faith.

**Step One:** Your mentee admits to you that in the past week they went out drinking and got into a fight in a bar and missed a day of work as a result. They feel terrible about what happened and are very much afraid the same thing could happen this week. Write down or rehearse what you might say to them by way of accountability and encouragement in their Christian faith.

**Step Two:** Suppose your mentee is a lifelong Christian, baptized as an infant, raised in a Christian home, who simply made some poor choices and suffered the consequences of those choices. How would you go about reminding them of who and what they were beforehand?

**Step Three:** Ask a fellow Christian what they think the difference is between an "information faith" and a "transformational faith." If they're not sure, explain it to them.



## Your Turn to Hold the Mentee and Mentor Relationship Accountable

It's your turn to hold the mentee and mentor relationship accountable.

### Review and Exercises

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

#### *Hold Yourself Accountable to Do What You Said You'd Do for the Mentee.*

- Step One: Gauge your activities for a week, keeping track of how much time you spend working, with family, at hobbies, relaxing, sleeping, etc. How much "expendable" time do you have in the course of a week? How much time would you have to devote to mentoring? Speak with someone who has done mentoring. Is this enough time?
- Step Two: Suppose you're writing in a diary. Write down a time when someone you trusted broke your confidence. What were the ramifications? In what way did it affect how others viewed you? How did it make you feel? What lesson is there in this for treating your mentees in confidence?
- Step Three: Write down three promises you have made to other people during the past week. It could be things you said you'd accomplish at work, chores you said you'd get done at home, or promises you made to your children or other family members. How did you do at carrying out these promises? Are you working on the ones not yet fulfilled? What are the consequences of not keeping promises you made? What lesson is there in all of this in keeping promises to your mentee?

#### *Hold the Mentee Accountable with Legal Issues, Their Struggle, and Their Action Plan.*

- Step One: Suppose you are at an initial meeting with your mentee and their parole or probation officer. Write down five questions you would want to have answers to.
- Step Two: Your mentee is struggling with the abuse of alcohol which, in the past, has led to angry outbursts and some domestic violence. This in turn, has led to bouts with depression which, in turn, leads to more drinking and angry outbursts. Do some online reading and research in order to help your mentee. Write down four facts or aspects about their struggle which you didn't know before which might help you hold them accountable with their struggle.
- Step Three: Think of a time you have come or will come to a fork in the road in your life. As you stand at the "stop sign" in front of this fork, what were or what are the consequences of taking each way? Is one way right or wrong, or is it simply a matter of one being better? How might your experience with such choices help you hold your mentee accountable to their action plan?

***Tie the Accountability to the Mentee's Faith***

- Step One: Your mentee admits to you that in the past week they went out drinking and got into a fight in a bar and missed a day of work as a result. They feel terrible about what happened and are very much afraid the same thing could happen this week. Write down or rehearse what you might say to them by way of accountability and encouragement in their Christian faith.
- Step Two: Suppose your mentee is a lifelong Christian, baptized as an infant, raised in a Christian home, who simply made some poor choices and suffered the consequences of those choices. How would you go about reminding them of who and what they were beforehand?
- Step Three: Ask a fellow Christian what they think the difference is between an "information faith" and a "transformational faith." If they're not sure, explain it to them.



## Lesson 7: Assess Your Readiness and Fit for This Type of Ministry



### Round Peg for a Round Hole?

Now you know what is involved in mentoring returning citizens after they have been incarcerated for a length of time. It is a rewarding ministry even as it can be a difficult one. But the fact that you are doing so while guiding your mentees with the Word of God into a deeper relationship with their Savior makes it even more rewarding. Knowing that the Savior is beside you and your mentees with his comfort and guidance makes a difficult responsibility a joyful one.

Knowing the blessings of this ministry doesn't mean you're cut out for it, however. Seeing the rewards involved doesn't make this ministry right for you. That is for you to prayerfully consider even as you discuss it with others who know you well. Are you a "round peg" for a "round hole" or will you be a "square peg" trying to fit into a "round hole"? Not everyone has the same gifts. There are many different types of ministry for all the different types of people the Lord has brought into his Church. Your task is to assess your readiness fit for this type of ministry.

In a way, we've come full circle to where you were before you began this course. Except that now you can make a more informed and prayerful decision about

whether to go ahead with this ministry. We have prepared some tools for you to help in this process.



### How to Assess Your Readiness Fit for This Type of Ministry.

1. ARE YOU SCARED OF MENTORING A PERSON IN PRISON MINISTRY?
2. DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN MEET WITH THIS PERSON KNOWING WHAT YOU KNOW?

### Are You Scared of Mentoring a Person in Prison Ministry?

We all face fears of certain things every day. Sometimes we might couch them as "concerns" or "hindrances," but truth be told, they're "fears," even if they're little ones. The question is, are they big enough to alter your plans or activities? Does fear of getting sick keep you from going out into public, or do you do so anyway, remedying your "concern" by taking precautions like washing your hands and keeping your distance from others who are obviously sick? Does fear of a car break in prompt you never to go anywhere, keeping your car in the garage, or do you go out anyway and take reasonable precautions like locking your car and making sure that valuables are out of sight?

### Identify Your Concerns and Reservations

No doubt you have "fears"—perhaps we can call them concerns or reservations—regarding the prison mentoring ministry. That's actually a good thing. It shows you're "counting the cost," and not taking lightly the responsibilities that go along with this ministry. The question is, do your concerns and reservations make it a "deal changer" for you? Are they large enough to prevent you from serving?

Take three minutes and articulate in the space below what your top concerns and reservations are regarding this ministry. If you need to, feel free to continue your list on a separate sheet of paper, or find an open spot in your workbook.



### What Are Your Fears and Reservations Regarding this Ministry?

1.

2.

3.



### Activity: Are You Scared of Mentoring a Person in Prison Ministry?

It's your turn to determine whether or not you are scared of mentoring a person in prison ministry.

Step One: Compare the list you've drawn up above to the common concerns mentioned back in the introduction to this course. Which concerns were alleviated through the information you gained along the way? Which concerns are new?

Step Two: Discuss these concerns with your instructor, one who might become your own mentor, or someone else who is familiar with the mentoring ministry. Are these reservations still "deal breakers" for you or concerns you can prayerfully navigate around while taking proper precautions?

Step Three: In the introduction, you were asked to articulate what you wanted to learn about the mentoring ministry. Have you learned it in this course? If there are things you wanted to learn, but which haven't been covered, ask your instructor, one who might become your mentor, or someone else who is familiar with the mentoring ministry.

### Do You Feel You Can Meet with This Person Knowing What You Know?

In speaking of fears and reservations a potential mentor might have in working with mentees, the biggest concern might be knowing the type of person the mentor is dealing with. They are offenders. Some may have committed what society deems to be very serious crimes. Others may have committed crimes as a result of problems and addictions they're still dealing with. You may be working with someone who has committed sexual abuse, theft or armed robbery, or who has been involved in the use and sale of illegal drugs. There was a reason they got into trouble with the law and were incarcerated.

### Abusing or Abused?

While it doesn't take away the severity of what a criminal has done, it does help to understand that in most cases there is a reason a person acts out in crime. In many cases it's because they themselves have been victims, abused, poorly parented, neglected, or hurt in some way. Many are simply living out the sinful and abusive lifestyles that were modeled for them.

The underlying reason anyone models or follows sinful behavior, of course, is sin. And that is a malady each and every one of us deals with. The potential mentee sitting in front of you may be guilty of a major or a minor infraction against the law. But, above all, they have violated God's law. And that puts them on the same plane as each and every one of us. In that sense, the mentee is no different from the mentor. Every one of us is theoretically capable of the worst of crimes and offenses. And if we were in the same circumstances as the person sitting in front of us, we may well have behaved in the same way.

Something else is true of the potential mentee sitting in front of you. As a sinner, they have been redeemed by the blood of God's Lamb, Jesus Christ, just as you have been. And, like you, they need to constantly bear that in mind. The good news of Jesus' forgiveness comforts in distress, heals wounds, changes hearts, and motivates the will. No matter how hardened a former criminal sits before you, the gospel can make a huge difference in this person's life!



### What Three Things Are True of the Person You're Meeting With?

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | THERE IS AN UNDERLYING REASON THEY OFFENDED.                |
| 2. | THEY ARE A SINNER IN NEED OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS.             |
| 3. | THEY'VE BEEN REDEEMED THROUGH CHRIST AND NEED TO KNOW THAT. |

### Why Do You Want to Do This?

A final evaluation of your motives for wanting to be a mentor is in order. Obviously, if it's for recognition, a point on your resume, or status of some kind, you're probably going to be disappointed. Some of those things may end up being fringe benefits of being part of a mentoring program, but they're not the kinds of motives that will carry you through the difficult times.

Go back to the introduction of this course. If your desire is to help someone struggling with fitting in, finding the basic essentials for life, and defeating the demons that got them into trouble in the first place, you're doing the right thing. If

your motive is to glorify your God and use your gifts to serve him, you're on the right track. If your desire is to learn from someone else and grow in your own faith too, this is good. And if you are striving to help someone walk in Christ with you on the road through life to the eternity that was won for them, you're spot on!

Take three minutes to delineate your specific reasons for considering a mentoring ministry.

### What Are Your Motives for Being Involved in a Mentoring Ministry?

1.

2.

3.



### Final Words from a Seasoned Mentor

"Be a solid friend to your mentee. Walk with God together. And as we remind each other in all aspects of ministry, 'Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:58)."



### Activity: Do You Feel You Can Meet with This Person, Knowing What You know About Them?

It's your turn to evaluate whether or not you feel you can meet with this person, knowing what you know about them.

Step One: Think of some instances in which someone in your situation might conclude that they can't meet with a mentee because the crimes they've committed affect them too personally.

Step Two: Think of some instances in which someone in your situation rejoices at the opportunity to meet with a mentee because the crimes they've committed affect them so personally.

Step Three: Compose a prayer asking God for wisdom and guidance as to whether or not you should go ahead with the Christian mentoring of a prisoner returning to society.



## **Your Turn to Assess Your Readiness and Fit for This Type of Ministry**

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It's your turn to assess your readiness fit for this type of ministry.

### **Review and Exercises**

Items flagged with arrows require action on your part. If you are uncertain how to proceed, reread the appropriate section in this lesson.

#### ***Are You Scared Of Mentoring A Person In Prison Ministry?***

- Step One: Compare the list you've drawn up above to the list you wrote out in the introduction to this course. Which concerns were alleviated through the information you gained along the way? Which concerns are new? Which are unchanged?
- Step Two: Discuss these concerns with your instructor, one who might become your own mentor, or someone else who is familiar with the mentoring ministry. Are these reservations still "deal breakers" for you, or concerns you can prayerfully navigate around while taking proper precautions?
- Step Three: In the introduction, you were asked to articulate what you wanted to learn about the mentoring ministry. Have you learned it in this course? If there are things you wanted to learn, but which haven't been covered, ask your instructor, one who might become your mentor, or someone else who is familiar with the mentoring ministry.

#### ***Do You Feel You Can Meet With This Person Knowing What You Know?***

- Step One: Think of some instances in which someone in your situation might conclude that they can't meet with a mentee because the crimes they've committed affect them too personally.
- Step Two: Think of some instances in which someone in your situation rejoices at the opportunity to meet with a mentee because the crimes they've committed affect them so personally.
- Step Three: Compose a prayer asking God for wisdom and guidance as to whether or not you should go ahead with the Christian mentoring of a prisoner returning to society.





## **Appendix – Sample Documents**

**Action Plan**

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**Application and Agreement Form**

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**Meeting Notes**

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**Mentee Program Path**

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**WELS Prison Ministry Resources**

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## Action Plan

**(SAMPLE action plan in RED)**

STEP 1: Answer the following questions for each of the categories in the Action Plan (Goals) below:

Where is the mentee now?

Where does the mentee want to be?

What barriers are there?

What are the goals/milestones to get there?

Be sure to review and include needs there may be in the following areas:

Faith, Family & Friends, Health (Mental & Physical, Addictions, Finances, Housing, Employment, and Legal Obligations.

STEP 2: Set S.M.A.R.T. goals for the steps needed to get from where the mentee is to where they need/want to be.

Note: You do not need to have a goal for each category. Don't force it. Too many goals at once are prone to failure.

STEP 3: Fill in the Action Plan below with those goals. The Action Plan will include:

-Goal: Clearly define, in a measurable way, what each specific goal is accomplishing.

-Barriers: Define any obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing the goal.

-Resources: Anything needed to accomplish the goal. Might be a person, transportation, monetary support, or the like.

-Due Date: Realistic timeframe to complete the goal. Be aware of supporting goals that need to happen before/after each specific goal. (Note: the "dates" in the sample below are listed in weeks & months, but a real action plan would have actual dates listed.)

#	GOAL	BARRIERS	RESOURCES (Need Help)	DUE DATE
0	Attend church once a week and spend at least 30 minutes per day in Bible/devotional studies.	Social anxiety (church/crowds). Not used to personal Bible studies.	Mentor/mentee Bible studies at weekly meetings. Use assignments between meetings to guide personal studies. Show how to access online church services - working towards mentor taking mentee to a lesser attended Monday night service.	ongoing
1	Attend 2 Alcoholics Anonymous meetings per week. Court mandated.	Don't see value in talking about addiction.	Mentor encouragement and accountability. Identified Sponsor at AA.	1 week out
2	Get a cell phone. Needed for communication: Daily check-ins required for possible drug/alcohol screen as part of parole. Employment search needs a callback number. General communication needs for returning to society.	Monetary restraints.	Mentor program willing to front the start-up cost of a pay-as-you go cellular phone. Refilling prepaid minutes will be re-evaluated on an ongoing basis.	Within 2 days
3	Find employment. Looking for a role as cook in a restaurant based on previous work experience and enjoyment of work.	Prison record limits options. Out of society for 4 years.	(see below/sub-goals)	1 month out
3a	Create a resume.	Employment gap. Never wrote a	Identified volunteer from local college willing assist with	Within 7 days

#	GOAL	BARRIERS	RESOURCES (Need Help)	DUE DATE
		resume before.	resume creation.	
3b	Find 3 opportunities available for job as a cook.	Don't know where to look.	Mentor will meet at library to show use of public computer and how to search online job postings.	Within 10 days
3c	Submit application for all 3 identified jobs.	Online career boards are new to them.	Mentor will meet at library to show use of public computer and how to apply for jobs online. .	Within 10 days
4	Move out of parents' house and into own apartment.	Lacking finances, coupled with minimal budgeting experience.	Church accountant volunteered to help create a basic budget. Job search (Goal 3) will generate recurring income.	6 months

**STEP 4:** Track and monitor goal completion. This includes updating, adding and/or removing goals.

# Application & Agreement

### Personal Information:

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### If Incarcerated Before:

Are You an Ex-Felon? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Most recent facility \_\_\_\_\_ Inmate #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Release: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

### Probation/ Parole Officer:

Parole/Probation Officer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

### Residency/Housing:

Where do you currently live?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is this a safe place (drugs, influences, etc.)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to You: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about our mentoring program?

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**Tell us your story:**

a. Why are you here?

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b. Do you struggle with addictions? If so, what?

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c. Do you have kids? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If so, what are you willing to share about them?

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d. Highest Level of Education? \_\_\_\_\_

e. Job Skills:

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---

f. Family Life:

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2. Why do you want a Mentor?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Information:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**OVERVIEW:** Our mentoring program is a Christian ministry in New Ulm, Minnesota. As a Christian church we proclaim and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, St. Paul’s Lutheran only provides significant financial assistance to individuals and families enrolled in the Mentoring program and committed to learning more about the biblical Christian faith. Below are commitments and action items you agree to before we continue in this Mentoring/Mentee Relationship:

- 1. I agree to strive to study God’s Word and pray every day. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 2. I agree to strive to attend program(s) at a church. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 3. I agree to have regular contact with my mentor/pastor (daily/then weekly) \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 4. I agree not to “ghost” my mentor and/or pastor (not contacting, disappearing, etc.). \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 5. I agree to walk through weekly training with my mentor. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 6. I agree to take care of my body with hygiene, healthy food, water and sleep. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 7. I agree to be honest and upfront with my mentor about my struggles and progress. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 8. I agree to seek employment and work sober and on time for my shifts. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial
- 9. I agree to stay in the mentoring program for the next six months. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial

10. I am in agreement with this mentoring program and my commitment to it. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial

11. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial

12. \_\_\_\_\_ Initial

*Psalm 90:17 May the favor of the LORD our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands for us. Amen.*

Mentee: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Printed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**A Prayer:**

Dear Father in heaven,

Grant your blessing on our plans and commitments. Strengthen our hearts, our hands, our feet and our minds to walk in your paths and to walk together in your forgiveness, your peace and in your love. Guide us by your commands and your care. In Christ Jesus we pray, Amen.



## Meeting Notes

**Date:** 05/05/2020

**Mentee:** Jake P

**Location:** Zoom virtual meeting

**Next Step:** meeting on 05/14/2020

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This was my first meeting with JP and unfortunately needed to be via a Zoom video chat due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This is not an ideal situation for an introductory meeting, but necessary due to the critical time frame of him only being out of prison for a couple of weeks. It was a fair introductory meeting and he wasn't overly talkative - which is to be expected as we're just getting to know each other. I can't yet tell if his too-cool-for-this attitude is a temporary wall he has up or if it's something bigger we'll need to work through.

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### **FAITH:**

JP does not have a strong connection to church. He has been "burned" in the past by the church and he doesn't have a great desire to get involved again. He seemed less than eager to talk about church or religion in our first meeting so I don't yet have a good understanding of what's going on in his head or heart.

### Personal Thoughts:

This is going to be the first priority for our relationship going forward. He has agreed to regularly attend church and be involved with Bible studies, devotions and discussions as part of the mentorship agreement. I will use every opportunity to tie our conversations back to God.

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### **FAMILY:**

JP is currently back at home with his mom. The jury is still out as to whether or not this is good or bad. He referred to his mom in a manner that tells me he sees her comments as nagging. It's uncertain at this point if her intentions are good, and would therefore be part of a good support system, or if it's a toxic relationship we should be focusing on getting him distanced from. Want to help build his familial relationships, but might need to get him his own place soon if they're not good living under the same roof. He did not bring up his dad or any siblings and I didn't push in this meeting.

Personal Thoughts:

Dig a little deeper into the relationship with his mom. Learn more about her church background and current level of involvement. Find out about the rest of his immediate family and any nearby extended family that may be part of a good support system.

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**FRIENDS:**

JP didn't discuss any friends in this meeting. He's playing everything pretty close to the vest. Knowing what types of friends he has will be a topic of conversation at our next meeting. Concerns are two-fold: One, he might end up crashing with them if the relationship with his mom deteriorates. Two, he will be hanging out with them at some point and need to know if this is a good or bad thing.

Personal Thoughts:

Want to tie in the possibility of introducing him to a few of the guys at church. It may help him feel better about having been "burned" before as well as get him some known-good friends.

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**STRUGGLE:**

He's just free-wheeling right now and admitted to not hitting his required AA meetings. When I asked him if he was concerned about the consequences, he shrugged it off. It's too soon in our relationship to understand if he even cares if he stays out of prison or not. He didn't appear to have much motivation to get a job. This needs to be fleshed out in our next meeting as his living arrangement and daily life needs will be impacted it.

Personal Thoughts:

My gut tells me he's just putting up a tough guy front for the time being. Need to define some goals to get him looking forward and less comfortable being stagnant.

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**CLOSING THOUGHTS:**

The first meeting with JP went about as expected. He may not have been forthcoming with information, but he was answering questions with short phrase answers - better than just staring at each other. Want to start laying the groundwork for goal setting to give him something he can sink his teeth into and give him a purpose.

My Personal Development:

Check with the mentor team to see how they’ve dealt with the “I’ve been burned by churches before” mentality. This is the second person in a month to make the same comment to me and I should have a planned method of addressing it and redirecting.

## Mentee Program Path

High level overview of typical mentor/mentee relationship from start to finish

1. Potential mentee identified
  - a. Referred by friend or family member
  - b. Referred by pastor
  - c. Referred by WELS Prison Ministry or another mentor
  - d. Potential mentee approaches mentoring group asking for help
  - e. Mentoring group identifies the individual by jail visits, drug court, or through normal daily contact
2. Initial conversation with member of mentoring group leadership team
  - a. First contact "interview" to get high level understanding of individual's needs
  - b. Get initial interest/commitment
3. Mentoring group leadership team matches mentee with appropriate mentor
4. Mentor and mentee have introductory meeting
  - a. Typically includes mentee, 1st contact mentor and recommended permanent mentor
  - b. Mentor and mentee agree upon a set meeting rhythm and agenda
5. Mentor meetings begin
  - a. Mentor leading, mentee learning
6. Goals are identified and set
7. Relationship begins building
8. Meetings continue
  - a. Mentee driving, mentor guiding
9. Goals are met, added to and/or adjusted
10. Trust is built
11. Friendship forms
12. Meeting rhythm tapers off in frequency
  - a. Mentee leading, mentor observing
13. Mentee is successfully leading a productive life with very minimal guidance from mentor
  - a. Relationship is more friendship at this point.
14. Mentee graduates and leaves program

## WELS Prison Ministry Resources

WELS Prison Ministry has numerous resources for ministry to the incarcerated which are free. To get the most up-to-date listing of resources, please use the following links:

1. WELS Prison Ministry order form for printed resources
  - a. Download from [wels.net/pm-print-order](http://wels.net/pm-print-order)
  - b. Includes printed Bible studies, Bibles, and other booklets.
  - c. Free to any WELS member doing jail or prison related ministry
2. WELS Prison Ministry resources for church leaders
  - a. Search Compassion Ministry Modules at [welscongregationalservices.net](http://welscongregationalservices.net)
  - b. Includes downloadable resources such as:
    - i. Worship plan for a Prison Ministry Awareness Sunday
    - ii. Sunday or Lutheran Elementary School lessons with a Prison Ministry application
    - iii. Bible class for Prison Ministry awareness (coming soon)
    - iv. Training videos (for this Mentoring Returning Citizens training)
    - v. Other tools to help congregational acceptance of returning citizens (coming soon)
  - c. Designed for congregational leaders to help lead members into this fruitful, joyful ministry.
3. Other WELS related resources from Institutional Ministries
  - a. Download from: [im.life/bible-lessons](http://im.life/bible-lessons)
  - b. Includes Bible studies for both prison ministry and substance abuse
  - c. Offered by Institutional Ministries which carries out personal visitation ministry in the three Wisconsin-based districts.
4. Contacts
  - a. Dave Hochmuth, WELS Prison Ministry Administrator  
[dave.hochmuth@wels.net](mailto:dave.hochmuth@wels.net)  
phone: 414-256-3243  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
N16 W23377 Stone Ridge Drive, Waukesha, WI 53188
  - b. WELS Prison Ministry Mailing Center  
[prisonministry@wels.net](mailto:prisonministry@wels.net)  
phone: 507-354-3130  
P.O. Box 452, New Ulm, MN 56073