

ACFwomen

Discipleship Toolkit

We can sit around and wait to finally feel “ready” or “qualified” to be that older, wiser voice in a young woman’s life, or we can open the Bible and open our hearts and SHOW UP FOR SOMEBODY. This whole process of stepping into each other’s lives isn’t nearly as complicated as we try to make it. It’s relationship. It’s friendship. It’s fellowship. It’s discipleship. And ultimately, it’s not for us. It’s not for other people. It’s for Him. Forever and only and always for Him.

– Sophie Hudson, *Giddy Up, Eunice: Because Women Need Each Other*

What Is Spiritual Mentoring and Discipleship?

“Spiritual mentoring is coming alongside of and partnering with who the Holy Spirit is being in the life of another person and infusing truth into that person’s reality.” (*Transforming Together: Authentic Spiritual Mentoring* by Ele Parrott)

“The spiritual mothering relationship is this: When a woman possessing faith and spiritual maturity enters into a nurturing relationship with a younger woman in order to encourage and equip her to live for God’s glory.” (*Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women Mentoring Women* by Susan Hunt)

Spiritual mentoring is one woman deciding to be intentional in the life of another woman to help her grow to be more like Christ.

It’s discipleship: a follower of Jesus training and teaching another woman how to follow Jesus.

Where Does It Talk About These Relationships in The Bible?

Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

John 13:34-35 (ESV)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV)

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Titus 2:3-5 (ESV)

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Start with Prayer

1. Ask God if there is someone in your daily life already that he wants you to mentor or that he wants to mentor you.
2. If God doesn't put someone on your heart, pray for God to bring a younger/older woman into your life for this specific purpose.

Assessment of Your Readiness to Mentor

1. Do you have “the right stuff” to mentor? According to *Transforming Together* by Ele Parrott, there are a few basic qualifiers:

- ✓ Be a woman who prays, with and for others and on your own. (James 5:16)
- ✓ Be a woman of faith. (Hebrews 11:1, 6)
- ✓ Be a woman who reads the Word and asks the Holy Spirit to be the Teacher. (John 14:16-17, 26; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 John 2:27)
- ✓ Be a good listener. (James 1:19)

Assessment of Your Willingness to Be Mentored

1. Why do you want to have a mentor?

Response:

2. Ask yourself this question: Do I want a quick fix, or do I desire to be transformed by Jesus? (from *Transforming Together* by Ele Parrott)

Response:

3. The kind of woman who responds well to being discipled (from *Transforming Together* by Ele Parrott):

- ✓ “Hopes that there’s more to being a follower of Jesus than what she is currently experiencing”
- ✓ “Desires to be challenged and to be asked penetrating, revealing questions”
- ✓ “Hungers for wisdom and inner strength” and wants to be “fed” with Biblical truth
- ✓ “Wants to ‘go there’ with someone whom she trusts to take her to Jesus”

What Do You Do? How Does Discipleship Work?

1. Examples of how mentoring might “look”

Think of mentoring as a **continuum from very informal to formal relationships**. All of these relationships are temporary and will eventually end whether it is because one of the women moves, the crisis passes, a discipleship goal has been met, a person's circumstances change and she is no longer available, or even due to death. Regardless of the length of the relationship or how formalized it is, all of these relationships can have the goal of intentionally walking alongside another woman to encourage her and help her follow Jesus.

Below are some examples. These are just examples to get you thinking! There is no one “right” way to do this. The goal is to be intentional and point another woman to Jesus.

Some examples of mentoring/discipleship:

- ✓ Doing an everyday activity together (such as cooking, laundry, grocery shopping or getting coffee) as you model a Christ-centered marriage or how to resolve conflicts, sometimes sharing life lessons, stories and Biblical truths
- ✓ Asking good questions and actively listening, pointing back to Biblical wisdom that is relevant
- ✓ Praying together by phone
- ✓ Texting with questions and texting back support and encouragement
- ✓ Finding verses to share and pray together during specific seasons of life
- ✓ Studying a book of the Bible together and discussing it
- ✓ Gathering a few younger women in your life into a small group and doing a Bible study together
- ✓ Setting a spiritual health goal and meeting/talking regularly to assess progress

Some examples of how often you might meet:

- ✓ Once a week for 3 months in person
- ✓ Every other week for 6 months by phone
- ✓ Texting two times a week to check-in
- ✓ Sending a weekly email with questions and encouragement

- ✓ Meeting once a month in person
- ✓ Meeting through Skype, Face Time, Google Meet-Up, etc.
- ✓ Meeting for a few years, in person every month and then by phone during the other weeks

Examples of places to meet:

- ✓ Coffee shop
- ✓ Playground (while the kids play) or park
- ✓ Your home/their home
- ✓ Before or after church
- ✓ The bench outside your office
- ✓ In your car
- ✓ While walking together in your neighborhood
- ✓ Any place you both feel comfortable, can hear each other, and can talk with confidentiality when needed

Worried about not having enough time?

- ✓ Invite the person to “do life” with you, doing something you are going to do anyway or that you are already doing (i.e., exercising, making dinner, doing a Bible study, volunteering at the school or with church).
- ✓ Look at who is already in your life that you can be intentional with as a mentor, or get to know better as a mentee (i.e., your next-door neighbor, the young mom in your Bible study, the friend of your teenage daughter, the younger or older woman you work with, the older woman who sits in front of you at church every week, that single mom you keep seeing at parent pick-up after soccer practice).
- ✓ Limit your time on social media, Netflix and television. You’ll be amazed how much time it frees up on a daily and weekly basis when you set limits on how long you let yourself spend on these activities. You might start by only checking social media twice a day for 15-20 minutes rather than repeatedly checking it throughout the day when you are bored or as a reflex. Instead, use that extra time to send a quick text or email to your mentor/mentee. Better yet, give her a call. What if instead of sitting in your car and checking your phone, you got out and used that that time to walk around the track or school parking lot with a younger/older woman while your kids are at practice? You get the idea!
- ✓ *Remember to “be a gleaner”!*

2. Finding a mentor/mentee

As we've talked with mentors and mentees, what we've learned is that they pray first and then they initiate something if they feel like God is prompting them to act.

Here are some tips:

- ✓ Pray and ask God to bring to mind, show you, or draw you towards another woman for a discipleship relationship.
- ✓ Think about women you feel an affinity with.
- ✓ Look around. What women do you see who exemplify the kind of spiritual walk you'd like to have? (The woman may be older or younger than you. She may be more of your peer in age or there may be a big age gap. She could even be younger than you but more mature in her faith. Don't limit your thinking here.)
- ✓ Be looking for each other!
- ✓ Put yourself out there. Participate in meet-ups, gatherings, Bible studies, women's events, small groups, serving projects, and/or missions trips where you will have opportunities to meet other women of different ages and stages.
- ✓ Talk to people who are different from you. God will often surprise you with the mentors/mentees he has in mind for you. They may not look or act the way you expected.
- ✓ Initiate something. Ask the person who God brings to your attention to meet you for coffee or a walk. Reach out and give the woman who came to mind a call and get to know her.
- ✓ There's no commitment in the initial meeting or conversation. If there isn't any chemistry there or it doesn't feel like a "fit," that's okay. Just step out and try it, and let God do the rest.
- ✓ Pray again. Ask God to reveal to you if this person is someone he is asking you to walk alongside (or to ask to mentor you).
- ✓ If God prompts you to do something, take the next small step of obedience.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask someone to mentor you, or to offer to mentor someone. There is always the freedom to say no or pray about it for a while.

- ✓ Let us know you are interested in discipling someone, or that you are looking for a mentor, and we'll be praying with you. We often hear from people looking for mentors and this will help us connect you with each other.
- ✓ If you need some help, contact **women@acfellowship.org** and we will try and help facilitate a connection for you. But first, we are going to ask you if you have done the above steps.

3. Discussing expectations

What are you looking for in a discipleship relationship? Probably one of the biggest pieces of advice we heard from mentors was that it is important to have a sense of expectations in the mentoring relationship. When each person knows what the other is hoping for, it helps you know if the mentoring relationship is the right fit and it also reduces any disappointment in the nature and scope of the relationship.

If you initiate a more formal discipleship relationship with someone, we encourage you to have a conversation where you ask a few of the following questions:

- ✓ What are you looking for from me?
- ✓ What do you hope to get out of this relationship?
- ✓ Is there a goal we can set so we know what we are aiming for in our time together?
- ✓ How long and how often would you like to meet with me?
- ✓ Where would you like to meet?
- ✓ Do you want me to give you some steps you can do to....care for yourself, grow in your prayer life, study the Bible, etc.?

You'll find that what mentees are looking for varies widely:

- ✓ Wise counsel
- ✓ Confidant, someone to trust
- ✓ Helper to make sense of a confusing or difficult season by drawing on God's truths
- ✓ Encourager
- ✓ Prayer partner
- ✓ Accountability partner

- ✓ Spiritual mentor or guide
- ✓ Bible teacher
- ✓ And more.....

As the mentor, be honest about what you can provide and your availability. In all likelihood, you will play one role (perhaps that of encourager) and another woman may play a different but equally important role (such as wise counsel or accountability partner).

Your goal or expectation as the mentor is to help your mentee become "independently dependent on Jesus," *not* to make her dependent on you. Always be quick to point to Jesus as the transforming power at work in her life, not anything you do or say (*Transforming Together* by Ele Parrott).

4. Active listening tips

Another key thing we heard from mentors was the need to practice active, effective listening. Here are a few guidelines from *5 Leadership Essentials for Women* by Linda Clark, adapted from Brenda Ueland:

Ten tips for effective listening:

- Stop talking.
- Behave as you think a good listener should behave (i.e., good eye contact, nonverbal signals that you are paying attention, be patient, don't react emotionally).
- Listen for the main point.
- Concentrate (i.e., focus on the person speaking).
- Be open-minded (i.e., don't make up your mind in advance or react).
- Watch out for words that elicit emotional reactions from you (and get past those words to understand the person speaking them).
- Defer judgment.
- Listen empathetically (i.e., hearing from the other person's perspective instead of your own).
- Ask questions.
- Stop talking.

James 1:19, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...."

5. Questions to ask every time you talk

- a. How is your time with God going? (Looking for consistency in the Word, prayer and worship.) How can I help you with it or help you be more consistent? What is God showing you/revealing to you during your time with Him?
- b. Are there areas in your life where you are struggling with purity, holiness or sin issues? (Goal is to be accountable and right before God. Encourage discussion/confession, bringing the issue before God.) Identify areas where they need to get help or change patterns of behavior or thinking.
- c. Who are you reaching out to and pouring in to/investing in? How can I help you do it better? Are you giving away what you are learning? (Goal is to help make discipleship the norm, a life-style. This also helps set the cultural expectation that everyone is being disciplined by someone and discipling someone else.) If they aren't yet doing this, pray with them about small steps they can take to intentionally walk alongside someone to help them grow spiritually – including their own children. If they don't feel equipped or prepared to do this, identify areas where they want to grow spiritually and help them do it.

6. Taking it to the next level...beyond the 3 sets of questions

If you really want to see spiritual growth in the women you are discipling, we encourage you to go beyond the 3 questions and prayer each time you connect. Consider doing one of the following together:

If you are working with a new believer:

When discipling new believers, we recommend going through the foundational aspects of being a Christ-follower and living a Christian life. We have two short studies we suggest for this:

- *Lessons on Assurance: Five Life-Changing Bible Studies and Memory Verses for New Christians* by NAVPress

- *Lessons on Christian Living: Eight Life-Changing Bible Studies and Memory Verses for Growing Christians* by NAVPress

From there, you may choose to do one of the following:

- Study a book of the Bible together. One of the four Gospels, the Psalms, Philippians, Ephesians, Esther, or Ruth might be great places to start.
- Jump into the Groups Ministry study called, "Pursuit," and read through the Bible together using the Read Scripture app.
- Do a Bible study together using free online studies from Right Now Media, Lifeway Women, If:Equip, or Proverbs 31 Ministries. Or check out a Bible study from the Groups Team or Women's Ministry libraries.
- Do a study on the spiritual disciplines together. Read about one or two disciplines then practice them for two weeks, trying new disciplines every two weeks and discussing what you learned or experienced and answering questions. A great book to use for this is *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster.
- Read a book about living the Christian life together and discuss what you learned. For example, you might read:
 - *Lies Women Believe and the Truth That Set Them Free* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss
 - *None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different than Us* by Jen Wilkin
 - *Keep It Shut: What to Say, How to Say It, and When to Say Nothing at All* by Karen Ehman
 - *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* by Henri Nouwen
 - *Lead Like Jesus* by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges

7. If you need good questions to ask...

You may be wondering what types of questions you should ask. Carol Kent offers great suggestions for types of questions to ask those you disciple in her book *Becoming a Woman of Influence: Making a Lasting Impact on Others*:

Getting to know you questions:

- What were your growing up years like?
- What is your best memory of your father? Your mother?

- How did your family celebrate Christmas? Your birthday?
- Did you go to church growing up? What was your experience like?
- What are your strengths? Your weaknesses?
- What are your hobbies, interests, and passions?
- In what part of your life do you feel vulnerable?
- What one thing would you like to do before you die?
- What keeps you from being as close to God as you'd like to be?
- How did you come to know Christ?

Questions that can't be answered with a yes or no, such as:

- Describe your identity...who are you?
- Who is Jesus to you?
- If money were not an issue, what would you do with the rest of your life?
- What's the biggest roadblock between you and your dream?
- In what specific areas would you like to see yourself grow during the next one to three years?
- What is the biggest answer to prayer you've experienced?
- What is your favorite Scripture verse and why does it mean so much to you?
- What would you like to do for God in your lifetime?
- What is God saying to you lately?
- How can I pray for you?

Questions that reveal truth:

- What stress point are you experiencing that you would like to eliminate?
- What is your big struggle?
- What are you fearful of?
- What sets you free?
- Are the choices you are making right now making you happy?
- What benefits are you receiving from your current lifestyle?
- How do you determine truth?
- What do you want your life to be like five years from now?
- Do you feel like you know your purpose in life?
- What can I do to help you?

Questions that expose people's deepest longings:

- What one thing would you like to see change in your spiritual life?
- What were your expectations when you got married?
- What were your expectations when you had your first baby?
- In what area of your life do you need advice?
- What did you want to grow up to do or to be? Have you fulfilled that dream?
- What is your life purpose?
- What do you want your legacy to be?
- What really matters to you?
- What are the 5 most important things in your life?

8. Setting boundaries

The hallmark of mentoring relationships is trust and confidentiality. With spiritual mentoring/discipleship, we'd add that the most important element is having Christ at the center of what you do and say.

Here are some guidelines:

- ✓ Be authentic.
- ✓ Cultivate a safe space to talk and share.
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality – keep in confidence what is shared between the two of you.
- ✓ If you are unsure how to handle a situation, ask permission to seek wise counsel from another trusted source such as a pastor or your own mentor.
- ✓ Be accountable – keep appointments, honor each other's time.
- ✓ Pray regularly, asking for wisdom and guidance. (James 1:5)
- ✓ Extend grace to each other. No one is perfect and you will not always say or do the right thing, even if your intentions are in the right place.
- ✓ Admit mistakes.
- ✓ Model healthy relationships, being quick to forgive each other.
- ✓ Love deeply.

9. Tools to help you study the Bible and grow in your relationship with Jesus

All mentors should strive to be growing in their relationship with Jesus, regularly engaging in prayer and reading the Bible. There are lots of great resources we

can suggest to help you do this. At a minimum, we'd encourage you to have some sort of organized plan to engage with God's word, whether that is reading the Bible on your own, listening to it, or doing a study (online, in print, etc.) In turn, encourage your mentee to establish her own Bible reading plan, walking her through it step-by-step if needed and checking in to see how she's doing sticking to it.

The You Version Bible App has tons of free Bible reading plans of various lengths and we'd be happy to help you select one that's right for you. Already mentioned is the "Pursuit" study that is using the Read Scripture app with its reading plan. We also have a lot of resources in the ACFgroups office that we can share with you. If you need help getting started on this, ASK US (women@acfellowship.org)!

A great book that you'll find helpful in increasing your Bible literacy is Jen Wilkin's *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds*. As with anything, the more time you spend in the Bible and praying, the more you'll get from it and the more you'll grow in your relationship with God. You can only give your mentee what you yourself have to give, so make sure you are regularly feeding yourself God's word.

Resources on Mentoring and Discipleship

Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Model for Women Mentoring Women by Susan Hunt

This book presents a biblical vision of women's discipleship, is grounded in scripture, and offers "A Spiritual Mothering Challenge" at the end of each chapter. This book is a very strong, well-grounded overview of all things mentoring from a Christian perspective.

Transforming Together: Authentic Spiritual Mentoring by Ele Parrott

This is a lovely book that presents an authentic, Bible-based mentoring model that focuses on how the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of other women. It includes lots of real-life examples of how to study a book of the Bible together and includes testimonies.

Becoming a Woman of Influence: Making a Lasting Impact on Others by Carol Kent

The purpose of this book is to “inspire and equip women to impact lives as Jesus did.” She focuses on seven principles, based on the life of Jesus and his model of discipleship, and illustrates how these can influence the lives of other women in a powerful and positive way. It’s an approach to mentoring that is simple, and easy to understand and apply.

Woman to Woman: Preparing Yourself to Mentor by Edna Ellison and Tricia Scribner

This is more of a workbook and “how to” manual, that includes discussion questions and can be done as a group study. If you feel you need to do a little heart work before you step into a mentoring role, this is an excellent resource. It is based on a more formal approach to mentoring.

Lies Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

A great book for mentors or mentees to read together, it covers many of those things we walk around believing as women that have no biblical foundation or truth. This book is a great conversation starter.

Giddy Up, Eunice: Because Women Need Each Other by Sophie Hudson

This is a fun, lighter look at mentoring. It examines three relationships in the Bible (Mary & Elizabeth, Ruth & Naomi, and Lois & Eunice) to show models of mentoring and make the case for stepping in to another person’s life.

Other books referenced and used in this document:

- *5 Leadership Essentials for Women: Developing Your Ability to Make Things Happen* by Dr. Linda Clark
- *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds* by Jen Wilkin