



# THE ART OF MENTORING

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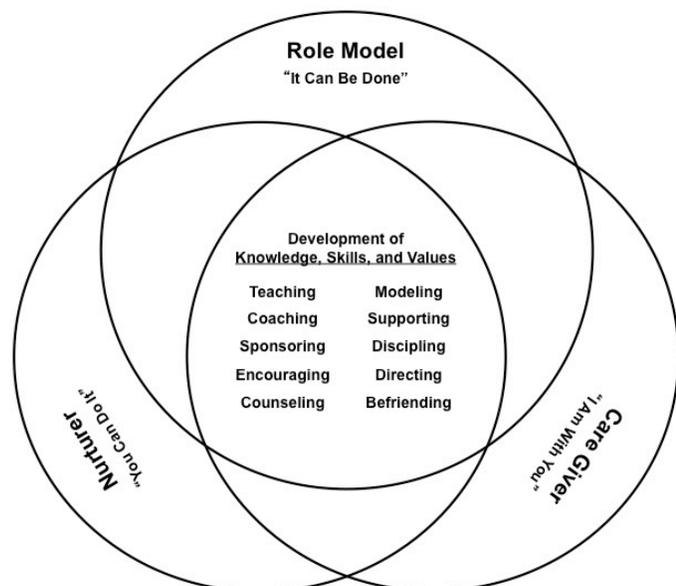
The development of effective leaders is not something that can be accomplished in a classroom setting alone. This is particularly true when we're talking about the development of Christian leaders. In the church, **leadership development is a form of discipleship and thoroughly rooted in the context of a personal relationship.**

A number of terms have been used to define this relationship, such as coaching or directing. But the term I like best is **mentoring**. In the classical sense, mentoring is a loving relationship in which an older or more experienced individual makes her life available to a younger or less experienced protégé for the purpose of drawing out what God has put in.

The mentor's aim is not to reproduce himself in the life of another, **but to see and call forth the unique brilliance God has sown in every individual.** While the impartation of knowledge, skills, and values is one of the desired outcomes of the mentoring relationship, the mentor recognizes that these virtues are more deeply engrained and personally owned when they are "caught" more than "taught." Therefore, the roles a mentor plays in the life of the protégé is even more essential than the specific knowledge, skills, and values he might impart.

An effective mentor will understand that she plays three critical roles in the life of the protégé.

As **role model**, the mentor points the way by embodying a way of life that is desirable to the protégé. Here, the mentor allows the protégé to "look under the hood" of her life, transparently sharing life experiences, successes and failures, and the wisdom gained from both. The life message of the mentor as role model is, *"It can be done."* If the mentor is candid and authentic in this role, her personal journey from inexperience and inadequacy to effectiveness becomes a source of great hope and inspiration for the protégé.



As **nurturer**, the mentor creates a safe environment in which the protégé can experience maximum growth and development. Not only is the protégé provided the necessary tools (knowledge, skills and values), but is given the opportunity to use them in a context that allows the mentor to continually speak into the life of the protégé, offering words of encouragement, clarification, and correction. The life message here is, *"You can do it."* When I was doing research on mentoring for my doctoral dissertation, one of the questions I asked was, "What was your mentor's greatest gift your to you?" The most common - and certainly the most passionate - response was, "My mentor believed in me when I didn't believe in myself."

As **care giver**, the mentor releases the protégé, but assures him that he is not alone in the journey. The life message here is, *"I am with you."* Though the mentor does not attempt to control how or where the protégé will live out his calling, the mentor continues to play an important role in the life of the protégé by serving as a sounding board, providing perspective, or simply offering ongoing encouragement and support.

Another interesting finding in my research is that those who have been mentored almost always end up serving in that role for someone else. Having received the gift of a role model, nurturer, and care giver, **how can one not pass that along to another?** And thus the life cycle of mentoring is repeated over and over again.