

## Session 4—Skills For Mentoring

**Premise:** *Engaging a younger man in a meaningful relationship will not only change his life and yours, but will build the Kingdom of God.*

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**(9) Active-Listening Techniques:** Active listening demonstrates care and builds trust. It’s not about offering quick solutions but about fully understanding what the other person is expressing. This skill is vital to a close father-son relationship, and the Bible repeatedly speaks of God as a Father who listens to His children.

Techniques include: *Paraphrasing*—Repeating back what the other person said in your own words to ensure understanding. *Clarifying*—Asking questions to dig deeper into what the person means. *Non-Verbal Cues*—Using body language like nodding and maintaining eye contact to show engagement.

To avoid pitfalls, don’t jump to conclusions, minimize their feelings, or dominate the conversation with your own stories of spiritual guidance.

“Such is God’s heart that even in all His omnipotent glory, He still makes time to listen to His children.”

“Being skilled in listening reflects our maturity in Christ, and it honors our son’s genuine need to be heard by a father figure.”

“Being humble means we hold lightly the need to offer advice before we have explored others’ needs.”

### Key Points:

- ⇒ *Listening skills require focus and practice to develop.*
- ⇒ *Allowing someone to open up and share their life with us communicates the simple truth: you matter, and I care about your life.*
- ⇒ *A listening father is humble, patient, gentle, and purposeful.*
- ⇒ *Never let your differences on the non-essentials divide you.*

### Discussion:

1. Are there any situations where you are prone to talk too much and listen too little?
  2. Which of the techniques feel the most difficult to you?
  3. How does it make you feel when someone actively listens to you?
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**(10) ENCOURAGEMENT:** Spiritual fathers play a vital role in reminding their spiritual sons of their God-given gifts, worth, and purpose. While these are not the only situations to praise your son, there are three that are particularly important: When you notice growth, in front of others, and during milestones in his life.

To encourage your son, highlight strengths and progress you’ve noticed. Share scripture or personal stories that uplift and inspire. Be specific in your praise; general encouragement is less impactful. Avoid false praise. Encouragement should be truthful and grounded in reality to maintain authenticity.

“Encouragement is perhaps the most important part of your role as a spiritual father. Encourage early and often in the relationship!”

“Make it clear that taking responsibility and repenting of our sin is a sign of strength, not weakness.”

“Christianity is not about behavior modification, it’s about heart transformation.”

## Key Points:

- ⇒ Guide your son in practical ways related to family life, health, home repair, work, and finances.
- ⇒ Encourage his spiritual walk to have disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, and church involvement.
- ⇒ Remember, any amount of pressure, obligation, or legalism from you will not grow his faith.
- ⇒ Just as God dotes on his children as a loving Father, young men need spiritual fathers who provide regular encouragement.

## Discussion:

1. If you grew up with a father, did he lean toward critique or encouragement? How did that impact you?
  2. In what areas in your life did you need the most encouragement in your 20s and 30s?
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**(11) Confronting Sin:** This is challenging but necessary. Approach it with humility, love, and a focus on restoration, not condemnation. Think about how you wish to be treated when you mess up.

When confronting sin, pray beforehand for wisdom and guidance. Address the issue privately and with respect. Focus on the behavior, not the person, and use scripture as the foundation. Offer support for repentance and growth, emphasizing God's forgiveness.

Understand that responses may vary—be prepared for defensiveness, denial, or repentance, and respond with patience and grace.

"The truth is you have no power to convict your spiritual son of their sin. That's God's role."

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgressions, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." (Galatians 6:1a)

"Leave the door open to hard conversations and ongoing relationship."

## Key Points:

- ⇒ It takes an incredible amount of courage and grace to confront sin in the life of someone we love.
- ⇒ Men do not change as the result of threat or judgment.
- ⇒ A biblical strategy for confronting a pattern of sin is to 1) start with evidence, 2) seek wise counsel, 3) raise the issue gently, 4) bring an ally (when necessary), 5) leave the door open, and 6) restore without judgment.

## Discussion:

1. Thinking about a time when someone confronted you in your sin, was it done well or in a way that brought shame and condemnation?
  2. Who is someone you can go to for wise counsel if you need it?
  3. Consider the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. Who do you identify with most in this story—the son, the father, or the brother?
  4. Are there any factors that you think could hinder your ability to confront a pattern of sin in your spiritual son's life, should the need arise?
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**(12) When A Relationship Ends:** Not all mentoring relationships last forever. It's important to discern when a relationship has reached its conclusion. Some relationships end naturally, others run their course, and at times there may be problems, whether benign or more serious.

Regardless of the reason, it's important to end well. To do so, use clear, in-person communication. Celebrate the growth and progress made. Offer continued support as needed (if appropriate), even if the formal mentoring ends. Reflect on what you've learned and how you've grown through the experience.

Some relationships may not develop as expected and there are false starts. Release the outcome to God, trusting Him to work in both lives.

"If a discipleship relationship does need to conclude, how you end it is almost as important as how you start it."

"A passive approach can be damaging to your son's sense of security, trust in others, and faith—especially if he has father wounds. It is immoral."

"Nothing you do is in vain. This relationship was a part of his spiritual journey and yours."

### Key Points:

- ⇒ It may take several conversations, but be clear, honest, and affirming—and meet face to face. Set clear expectations with a firm ending date.
- ⇒ Be prepared to grieve the ending of the relationship. Talk through those feelings with some men who are close to you, preferably other spiritual fathers.
- ⇒ Prayerfully consider what your next steps should be, and who else God may be calling you to invest in.

### Discussion:

1. What lessons have you learned from ending relationships in the past?
2. Describe a time when someone ended a relationship with you. Did they do it well, and if not, how?
3. How has this experience impacted your own spiritual journey so far?

## THE CALL TO ACTION

**Do you love Christ?**

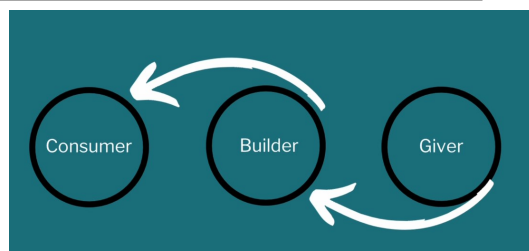
**Do you care about the next generation of men?**

In the last third of their lives, men should be givers of their knowledge, resources, time, and energy. As a giver, you support the builders as they oversee the consumers.

The tragedy is when people in their last third do not become givers, but revert back to being consumers. They simply consume for themselves the resources they have accumulated. Rather than contributing, they retire—not just from a career standpoint but relationally and spiritually.

This is not biblical. It's not good for God's people. For his Church. The most satisfying feeling on your death bed will be knowing that you are dying with nothing left to give. You gave your all.

**We are restoring the ancient order of discipleship. We are calling the mature men in the church to train the younger men in the way that they should go. YOU are qualified. Are you willing?**



"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, **WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY**, when you lie down, when you get up."  
- Deuteronomy 6:6-7

**BONUS CONTENT:** The following are additional considerations to aid in the role as a spiritual father or even in your other relationships as you go along the way.

**REMAIN A DISCIPLE:** No matter how much you care and how skilled you are in your role as a spiritual father, it's vital to prioritize your own spiritual health and growth. Just as you would encourage a spiritual son to maintain basic spiritual disciplines, we want to encourage you to be faithful in these five areas:

- ◆ **Remain active in the local church**—as Christians we need the local church and a local family of believers in our journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.
  - ◆ **Remain in the Word**—No real transformation happens apart from the Word of God. Men who regularly read and apply God's living and active word experience growth and fruit in their lives.
  - ◆ **Remain in Prayer**—As with the Word, so it is with prayer. Prayer is so important that the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ himself sits at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf.
  - ◆ **Remain connected to a pastor or leader**—We all need someone with greater maturity than us to be a listening ear—someone who will lift our arms when we're tired, correct us in love, and show us the grace of a shepherd.
  - ◆ **Remain connected with other spiritual fathers**—if you do take on the role of spiritual fathers, it's important to have brothers walking beside you who can support one another, discuss the challenges you're facing, and look for answers together in Scripture to the tough questions you may be asked. Meet regularly with these men and encourage each other.
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**JOURNAL THE RELATIONSHIP:** It will be incredibly helpful over the course of a father-son relationship to keep a record of your journey. It is recommended that you write in a journal on at least three occasions:

1. After every face-to-face meeting.
2. After a difficult or uplifting interaction, whether by phone, text, or in person.
3. When the Lord prompts you to write something down that pertains to your relationship.

Here are some ideas for what you might write about:

- ◆ A log of the interactions you had during the week, with any thoughts you might have.
- ◆ Specific prayers for your spiritual son. Note whether it was requested or on his behalf.
- ◆ Problems he expressed with his marriage, children, work, parents, friends, finances, health, church, or other areas of his life. This is especially important if you want to follow up.
- ◆ A behavior or attitude that you noticed and want to encourage, or one that you might want to prayerfully address.
- ◆ Times where you have had difficulty communicating or connecting with him—and what you might have done to contribute.
- ◆ Any boundaries that you need to establish or reinforce.
- ◆ Possible future plans, including activities or meeting places.
- ◆ Goals.

As the months and years go on with a spiritual son, your journal will be of immense value to you. Through the prayers, thoughtfulness, and commitment captured, you will honor God, your calling, and your son.

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#### **Resources:**

- Chapters 9-12 and appendices in *The Way Forward* Guidebook
- [www.spiritualfathers.com](http://www.spiritualfathers.com)
- [www.maninthemirror.org](http://www.maninthemirror.org)
- Nate Flynn—Area Director, Southern Indiana <> (317) 439-4453 <> [nateflynn@maninthemirror.org](mailto:nateflynn@maninthemirror.org)