**Mentoring and Accountability (STRATEGY)**

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Very few of us (if any) have the motivation and will power to stay the course alone. And, even if a person can do it by themselves, they miss out on relationships and becoming part of a team of people who know one another and have learned to trust one another by “carry[ing] each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6: 2, NIV).

Most of us can benefit from a helping hand along the way. A good mentor can provide loving encouragement and accountability that can help us in our personal transformation and leadership development while we stay the course of our strategic plan of action.

One sees this in the relationship that Jesus had with his disciples. Jesus compassionately ministered to the multitudes while he also invested in a few faithful followers. Let’s take a closer look at how Jesus invested in his disciples in such a way that they were empowered to do what he did while learning to invest in others who would in turn do the same. I call this process spiritual mentoring. Definitions of spiritual mentoring include:

* “Mentoring is a relational experience in which *one person* *empowers another* by sharing God-given resources” (Clinton, *Connecting*, p. 38).
* Transformational relationships.
* Friendships with Godly purpose and outcome.

I like to think of spiritual mentoring as a relationally-based process of empowerment that results in mutual growth spiritually. Spiritual mentoring benefits both parties and is based in a Biblical understanding of relationships that are “mutually submitted to Christ and one another” (Ephesians 5: 21). Let’s look at this concept of relational-based empowering a little closer.

What do I mean by empowerment? Empowerment involves transformational relationships in which all participants come to a healthier understanding and experience of their God-given potential as individuals, members of social networks, and members of a community who serve and empower others. Let’s look at each aspect of empowerment a little closer:

1. *Transformational Relationships* - involves caring and sharing of life experiences and resources.
2. *Mutually Empowerment* - involves the healthy growth of all parties involved.
3. *Understanding and Experiencing God-Given Potential* - involves the transformational work of the Word of God and the Spirit to change us so that we can become more like Christ in character, perspective, and behavior while discovering our uniqueness as God’s “human” creation.
4. *Serving and Empowering Others* - involves the understanding that realizing our unique potential in God connects us to others in empowering ways through service.

According to J. Robert Clinton (*Connecting*, p. 95-96) there are eight major empowerment functions possible in healthy spiritual mentoring relationships:

1. Encouragement
2. Being a sounding board
3. Evaluation
4. Perspective
5. Advising
6. Networking
7. Guidance
8. Healing

Sounds great, but you may be a little cautious about this. Perhaps you have been burned in some close relationships and are not very eager to try again. That is understandable, but there are some really good reasons to be involved in spiritual mentoring relationships. Let me suggest a few:

* We are social beings and need healthy relationships.
* We live in a socially dysfunctional culture.
* Our individualism is causing burdens too heavy to hold up under.
* We need others to help us mature as whole people.
* We can save ourselves a lot of “drama” and grief if we can establish healthy accountability.
* We have something to offer others.

The bottom line is that we need one another to be fully human. We were created that way and we realize our full humanity only when we are involved in loving God, one another, and our neighbors.

**Real Accountability**

Why is accountability important? What is the big deal? Don’t most people learn from their mistakes and figure it out eventually? I wish that was the case, but if you can remember from the Introduction of this workbook, “few leaders finish well.” In part, this is because they did not understand the importance of real accountability. It is important because:

1. God holds leaders accountable for leadership influence and for the growth and conduct of followers.

2. Leaders must recognize an ultimate accounting to God in eternity for their performance as a leader in this life.

3. Leaders need to recognize that they will receive rewards (in this life and in eternity) for faithfulness in character, ability, and accomplishments.

4. Leaders need to recognize their gifts and use them for the glory of God and the benefit of others.

5. Leaders need to live lives above reproach because their modeling has a powerful influence on others.

6. Leaders need healthy accountable relationships with trusted others because they are weak in their humanity.

What does real accountability look like? Linda Galindo (*85 % Solution: How personal Accountability Guarantees Success*) describes real accountability in terms of the following five behaviors (p. 185):

1. Accountable people are clear about what they expect of others and about what others expect of them.
2. Accountable people make clear agreements.
3. Accountable people establish ownership for every task. They put a “who” with every “what,” and always know “by when.”
4. Accountable people keep to timeline and meet their deadlines. If that’s not possible, they renegotiate before the due date.
5. Accountable people focus on results.

For transformation to take place in mentoring relationships, goals that lead to appropriate action need to be established by the mentoree as a result of the process of effective communication. If transformation is to take place out of the communication process, the mentor must carefully move the mentoree from communication to action.