

A WILLING SPIRIT

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Mentoring and the Human Spirit

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Jenny—never not be part of my life

Samuel—our son safely home

Rod—your mentoring changed me forever

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak

— *Matthew 26:41 ESV*

Grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me

— *Psalms 51:12*

*God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey
his own purpose*

– *Philippians 2:13 GNT*

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

A significant moment in this book coming together took place in Japan. I met a local pastor and when he heard I mentored people, he said, “I have three young men in my church. I know they’d benefit from a mentor. I am willing to do it but what do you actually do?” I knew I was writing this book for people like him.

For many, mentoring seems like a good idea, but how do you make it work? How does it help someone? Another moment of clarity arrived when I understood that mentoring is not helping your mentee to receive knowledge from you, rather it is about them receiving your spirit. I’ve received my mentor’s spirit. I’m now passing my spirit on to those I mentor.

Understanding more of the human spirit and how it can become more a part of our lives has become my life’s work. My spirit has grown my understanding of God, others, and myself. I’m discovering afresh how life-giving the human spirit is. As it wins over the noise of the body and soul, it powerfully integrates us.

My commitment is to help develop each mentee’s understanding of their spirit and assist them to hear God. Edith Humphrey writes, “The voice of the spirit is the inner mentor that lifts us from unproductive inclinations and impulses.”¹

That’s it! The human spirit is our inner mentor. This book aims to unfold this truth as it plays out in our lives. Within each of us the Father has deposited an assignment. Our spirit knows what it

is. Remove our shackles and we discover our story. Each of us has a song that is ours alone to sing.

There are books on the mathematics of mentoring. This book focuses more on the poetry, magic, and the music of mentoring. It's not forensically analysing the intricacies of mentoring. Rather it's more witnessing, observing, reporting on what unfolds in the mentoring process.

This book springs from distilling the landscape of my experiences. It comes from a life-long commitment to facing and being free from the noise within. I am given over to "Jacob-wrestling" (Genesis 32:22-32). A mentee captured it, *Marty you wrestled to find who you are, now you're helping others find who they are. I'm still wrestling.*

I have lived this book. It has unravelled as I've sought to hear what God has wanted to say. So, I write ... I write of things larger than me. I write from the overflow of my heart. I write knowing a bedrock truth; God is my Father. I am a beloved son. I feel it in my guts. I write to help others find who they are. In helping them know who they are they will know what they want to do with their life. I write for anyone who wants to understand mentoring, to pass on what the Father, and those I mentor, have taught me. Any wisdom you discover comes from the grace of the Father, Jesus' friendship, the urging of the Holy Spirit, my mentors, mentees, and my spirit.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

I am conscious that much of what's here is my story, my experience. It's also a record of how others have experienced mentoring. In part it's an autobiography yet it is bigger than I am. I hope I don't come across as someone *bigging* themselves up. This is why, above everything else, I've sought to guard my heart, "for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23).

I hope you find yourself in these pages. As Carl Rogers observes, "What is most personal is most general."²

INTRODUCTION

C.S. Lewis writes, “The more we get what we now call ‘ourselves’ out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become.”³ Someone (unknown) phrased it: the more the Holy Spirit has of you, the more you have of yourself. As I become more myself, I am more able to help mentees be themselves.

MENTEES CONTRIBUTING

If it takes a village to raise a child then it takes a tribe to write a book on mentoring. This book has come from a community of brothers across the world who’ve generously shared insights and stories. I hope you’ll enjoy meeting them. Some of their stories are more *in-process*, while others are *further-along*. Over one hundred mentees have contributed at some level. It means, what’s unfolding before you is a *story-filled* book. It’s their story as much as mine. Every time a mentee speaks, it is in italics.

Mentoring is the most powerful and effective way I know to make and grow disciples. Many mentees are now making disciples who make disciples. You’ll meet them in the pages ahead, fighting for their freedom and the freedom of others.

N.T. Wright, exploring what the coming Kingdom looks like, writes, “Jesus was inaugurating a whole new world, a new creation, a new way of being human ... He was saying. ‘This is the new creation you’ve been waiting for. It is open for business.’”⁴ This is far from being *Pie in the sky when you die*, rather, as we Australians say, *It’s steak on the plate while you wait, mate!*

This life in its fullness is to be discovered and known now. My prayer as you read is you will find what’s possible for you and be empowered to *have a go* at mentoring or, to build on what you’re already doing.

DEDICATION

There is one person, my wife, Jen, who's supported and stood by me. It's wild how she's believed in me, willing at times to sacrifice our time together so I could write.

We have lived in six countries and welcomed hundreds of people into our home. Mentees have often found a home with us for days or weeks or months.

I would simply not be doing this without her. She tells me, "I have given you a long lead."

She holds the string that enables this kite to fly.

"Many women have done wonderful things, but you've outclassed them all!" (Proverbs 31:29 MSG)

You have paid a high price to see this book happen.

I recall unpacking my bag at a retreat house where I had gone to write. I noticed a card she'd smuggled in:

Write on, my love
Write with a clean hand and a pure spirit
Write in obedience
Write with the end in mind
Write to bring freedom
Write for those without fathers to rise up and take
their place in the world.

I love Jesus. He is truly amazing. I'm grateful I can serve Him alongside my wife.

Alongside my first mentor, Rod West, and our beloved son, Samuel, who awaits our heavenly reunion, I dedicate this book to you, Jen.

PART 1

**Setting Up
Your Mentoring**

1

THE POWER OF BEING SEEN

A young man who doesn't have an older man who admires him is impoverished

— Unknown

A truly great mentor is hard to find, difficult to part with, and impossible to forget

— Unknown

If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants

— Isaac Newton

Real life is meeting

— C. S. Lewis

I have been deeply impacted by three remarkable mentors during different seasons of my life. Each became a close friend. They poured life, wisdom, and yes, their spirit into me. Just as Elisha asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit to be upon him before being taken up to heaven (2 Kings 2:9), so I have their spirit *upon me*. They were generous in time and in their on-going support. They carried a willingness to listen and encouraged me whenever they could. What they invested in me now flows from within me.

A mentee once commented, *You have passed on to me the gift you received from your mentors.*

My first mentor I met in high school. He mentored me for 47 years. The second mentored me for 25 years, modelling a Kingdom life accompanied by skills to put it into practice. My third mentor helped me to reflect on mentoring and over these last 10 years he's sharpened and prepared me to write this book.

Each one of them committed long-term to help me grow. Each brought something different that refined me. When, in different life-stages I couldn't see myself, they could. It made the difference. They believed in me and modelled a way of living that I can now model to others.

It is a great privilege to be admired by someone older than we are. Each of my mentors saw the wonder, the giftings in me. They helped me discover what I couldn't see.

Each of us needs people who encourage and believe in us; there is great power in being seen.

ROD – A LIFETIME MENTOR

I was twelve-years-old when I met Rod. He was the housemaster of a boarding school I was sent to in Sydney, Australia, for *a bit of religion*. From the get-go I felt seen, loved and believed in. I'd never met anyone quite like Rod West. He changed my life. He spoke of Jesus; yet beyond the words he showed God to me by the way he shepherded me. I *caught* God through Rod's life. I believed

and embraced his faith. I followed Rod as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). He was Jesus to me.

He was a role model, friend, and inspiration. I would always feel comfortable, *at home*, when I was with him. I see now that I was looking for a father figure. Through Rod's love, I discovered the love of the Father. It changed me forever. I knew who was me. I discovered my own personhood. I feel so fortunate to have had a mentor through my teenage years. It was grace totally from the Father. He knew what I needed. To have an older person believe in me was deeply affirming. It helped me survive adolescence. He may have been a teacher, but he still reached out to me. There was something different about him. Whenever we'd talk, I just knew I was going to be okay, everything would be fine. I had no idea what my spirit was, yet I see now how it came alive wherever I was with Rod. I'd respond to his warm, generous spirit. I was hungry for someone to see me and to help make sense of what was going on for me.

As a seventeen-year-old he trusted me to welcome and mentor new students in our boarding house. All I did was what Rod had done for me. Listen, see people, give them space to be themselves, believe in them, and cheer them on. As I spent time with him, both at school and after leaving, I would intentionally watch how he worked. He lit up a room when he entered. He was positive, optimistic, and enjoyed people. He would encourage me constantly saying words like, "What remarkable work you are doing for the Kingdom!" His belief in my calling never wavered. He and his wife Janet prayed every day for Jen and me.

I recall inviting him to a meeting of Church leaders in Sydney who were part of a combined Churches program we were running. He knew a number of the leaders. They introduced themselves. When it came time for him to talk, rather than introducing himself he exclaimed, "Well I'm here to let you know about Marty Woods. You know he won the high jump at school and, in his Ancient

History final exams, he scored in the state's top 10." It was such a brazen promotion of his mentee. I never forgot it though. I actively seek to *big up* those I mentor wherever I can.

Rod was real. I recall him speaking to a group of us, fourteen-year-old boys hungry to make sense of life, and particularly, of sex. He never held back from questions we'd ask. Even now I say to those I mentor, "You can ask me anything." His was a practical faith, deeply rooted in an incredibly warm and endearing personality. His greatness was seen in the way he served and saw people. Here's how Janet, his wife, described him:

Yet it was people he most cared about,
The elderly who had lost their way,
The little boy who had missed his bus,
The disappointed parent,
The bullied, the ignored ...
The lonely, the unloved.
His gaze would swivel,
Improbably ... his smile widen,
Ever identifying need,
Discovering beauty in the human heart,
And wherever in the wider world.

He was a strong soul. Humble and honest, never trying to be someone he wasn't. He just loved God. He was not a stereotypical male figure. He wasn't particularly coordinated, and didn't play many sports. Yet he was comfortable in who he was. I noticed. He was committed to supporting each boy on their journey to manhood. He modelled to many how a man lives and what a true man is like. I saw what it meant to live a life for others.

After leaving his role as the head of a school, he was often invited to speak at school reunions. He would begin with these words, "Boys, if I did anything that got in the way of your journey

to manhood, I am sorry. I know I made decisions that may not have helped you grow into strong men." Such humility.

He had a razor-sharp vision and commitment to his call. No doubts. He had a vision for how Christians could engage in society. His calling was to lead in love and service. He did that. He encouraged everyone to work out their calling in their particular sphere and vocation. He intuitively knew what the right way was, the Kingdom way. He truly was a man after God's heart.

Rod died several years ago. I reflect on his life often as I write this book. All I learnt from him still helps me make sense of who I am and how I work. Rod learnt the discipline of listening to his spirit and to God's Spirit. People he worked alongside picked up his spirit. It wasn't forced or manufactured—it just happened. I recall his daughter, Julia, telling me she saw a similar spirit in me as in her father. It reminded me of 2 Kings 2:15, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." I may not have received double his spirit (as Elisha wanted), yet I received enough to equip me to help others.

Somehow when I was talking with Rod, I was talking to a man in contact with eternity. He was 30, 50 or 70 years old – all at the same time.

Rod had a capacity, like no one I'd ever met, for profound mentoring relationships. He literally mentored hundreds of people—many who became head of schools, pastors and leaders in their field of work. I now understand that he passed on to me a similar capacity to hold a growing number of mentees in my heart and mind.

At his funeral, over 3,000 people gathered to celebrate his life and share stories of how their lives were changed because they knew Rod West. If I can pass on my spirit to those I mentor, like he did to me, I will die a very happy man. If I could talk to Rod now, here's what I would say:

Rod, I recall our last time together. You and Janet paid for a holiday on a Greek island for us. Sitting with

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you, that morning, alongside the glistening Greek-blue sea, we celebrated our friendship, our life, and our journey together.

I felt honoured to say a thanksgiving prayer as your coffin was lowered into the earth. Now you're home amongst the crowd of witnesses, but I sense you are still cheering me on, proud of what I'm doing ... just like you always were.

I have a feeling you will be there, waiting at the gates, ready to welcome me into our eternal home. I glimpse that smile and hear your words, "How marvellous to see you again!"

O happy day!

You are all over this book, all over my mentoring. You're not here but your spirit lives on in many of us who you mentored. Thank you for being a friend, mentor, and father to me. Your life calls me out to greatness. I am willing to do whatever God asks of me. Just like you did.

I respect and salute you. I honour your life, and follow the Christ you showed me with everything I have.

MAL – MY MINISTRY YEARS MENTOR

When I'm asked, "Where did you learn the skills you have in mentoring?" My answer is always the same, "I worked alongside Mal." Mal not only taught the theory of mentoring; he showed me how it worked by mentoring me and inviting me to learn as I watched him mentor others. Mal invited and trusted me to work with him in a discipleship school.

I recall the first time we met in 1985. We were sitting in his living room. He listened deeply as I shared my vision. Then he did

something I have never forgotten. He placed his hand on my knee and said, "Marty, you are one of us!"

In that moment, I felt seen. My dream of a transformed Australia wasn't strange to him. He'd been working on it for years. I'd found my tribe. I belonged. He'd encourage me to find my expression of mentoring. He trusted me in caring pastorally for some of our workers.

The greatest gift Mal gave was to introduce me to my spirit. I had a feeling of *something* within me. I'd been moved by my spirit but didn't know what it really was. Mal helped me see beyond a *feeling* to discover a whole new reality within me. It was like my ears were stuffed. Mal helped unblock them. In hearing and understanding my spirit, I connected more fully than I ever had with the Father. I recall thinking about my spirit; so you're the one who's been there all along.

It changed me totally. It became the basis of my mentoring. I grew in listening and trusting it. I could hear the spirit of others and help them see it. I am thankful for this gift from Mal. We worked closely together and I got to see him up close. He would deal with issues head-on. "It's better," he'd say, "to take people on when you first encounter the challenges." I never forgot that. I observed him caring for those who others could miss; little lambs. Somehow, he managed to find time for everyone.

Mal was committed to the Kingdom. He gave everything for the transformation of Australia. He was an inspiring speaker. Yet I recall how, rather than talking to a thousand people who would clap him, he'd prefer speaking to three or four people who wanted to do all they could to transform their community. I'd watch as he'd rise above any swirling noise. Many wanted his time. Despite the demands on him he remained relaxed, managing his world. He lived life at another level ... in kairos.

I recall a friend saying of a talk Mal once gave. "That was the best talk I've ever heard. What did he say?" I watched him defusing

challenging situations with humour. Whenever we'd run our community festivals, I'd observe him dancing the Hokey Pokey as if for the first time. We invited him to preach at our wedding. Like Rod, he played a significant role in my life as a father figure.

Mal was wise. I appreciated listening to the truths he'd share. They now have become part of my trade. I share them often with those I mentor and smile when I hear my mentees share them with others. He would say you don't learn from your mistakes; you only learn from reflecting on them. It's why I spend so much time asking questions; helping mentees see what is going on for them. He would tell us we know we are chosen when we discover how God won't let us get away with anything. I see that in the lives of so many I am working alongside and in my life. Mal generously shared his wisdom.

This wisdom overflowed into helping me understand what was going on within me. I had an active *parent tape*, noises from a replay of my past. He helped me to talk about it, then to see it. It was invaluable for my growth. His finding time to listen to me led to me trying to make myself available with mentees and those I work alongside.

Mal invited us to move overseas to grow Fusion's international work, beginning in the UK. He stood with us as we piloted a way through many challenging situations. Mal was incredibly gifted. He shared his gift with many others. Many of the truths I share here, I watched him living out. I was like a sponge, often taking notes. I wanted to learn and he was happy to teach me.

He warned me there were times he could, and would disappoint me. He too had clay feet. I couldn't imagine that at the time ... but I was glad he was honest about his human frailty, because he was right; it happened. I had him on a pedestal. I learnt that you can only have authentic fellowship when you can move beyond pedestals. It was a painful lesson.

I make a point of letting mentees know I am far from faultless, I will let them down, and I will not always be the person who helps them as they may feel they need. Yet I let them know of my commitment to grow together.

MARTIN – A SPIRITUAL GUIDE AND MENTOR

Through a friend's suggestion, I encountered Martin when we were living in London. It was a difficult season in my life. In the midst of a crisis, I was losing my way. I remember his first words after I shared my story. "I think I can help you." It was balm to a troubled soul. Like with my other two mentors, I instantly felt seen. From the first meeting I knew I'd found the right person. He helped me develop tools to explore what was going on. I began to trust myself more. Martin saw me, understood my struggle. His questions helped me explore what was happening for me.

He knew I needed time to face internal noises working against my freedom. He challenged me to take a sabbatical. I will always be thankful for those *hidden months*. We retreated to a village in the south of France. Time, finally to stop, get off the treadmill, to reflect and grow. It was the work I had to do. Those months alone with my wife and God changed me. My ministry moved to another level. I was different after I returned. I am now a great advocate for sabbaticals.

Martin was a sage where I needed one. A wise friend, a shepherd carrying me when it seemed too hard. He was a good Samaritan collecting me from the road, attending to my bruises, finding the best inn. He helped me reframe my story. I knew more clearly than ever before who my Father is and I am His son. He helped me believe this. I am passing this on to many others.

We moved countries. He agreed to continue meeting over the internet. Even when he retired, he found a way to listen and support me. He was always delighted to see me thriving and grateful to contribute to my life. His humility moved me. He would reflect

with me as I was writing, I struggled to articulate what lay at the heart of the mentoring experience. I would say to him, “I know it’s profound what is taking place in the lives of those I’m mentoring, but what is that helps make this process work?” He would speak of each human encounter as ultimately being a mystery. It was possible to trust it without needing to understand it. The mystery of our spirit in the pursuit of the Divine. The mystery of a Divine encounter, to trust what cannot be named.

I am thankful for his insights and wisdom. He told me if they helped, then share them with others. So I am...with you. Martin felt it was time to fully retire. It was challenging to bring our mentoring times to a completion. We wanted to finish well. We celebrated our friendship, my growth and the value of our journeying together over ten years. More irregularly we plan to keep in contact. We are still both interested in each other’s lives.

Rod, Mal, and Martin all were committed to my growth. They loved me, each in their own way. They’re woven into my story. They gave so I can now give. I honour these three men.

I am standing on the shoulders of giants.

OVERVIEW OF A MENTORING PROCESS

We never find fulfilment except by living in a spirit of adventure

— Paul Tournier, *The Adventure of Living*

To do something we enjoy is to begin to know ourselves

— James Krenov, *The Impractical Cabinetmaker*

*If you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My
spokesman*

— Jeremiah 15:19 NASB

One mentee offered to share his story of mentoring:

"What do you not want to tell me?" Marty asked.

After a long silence and 24 years of sin and shame, the secrets poured out. That night, I spent hours divulging things I had never told anyone: the sexual encounters that scarred my psyche, the insecurities about my masculinity that I wore like skin, and all the lies Satan had whispered into my ears since childhood.

The spirit within me cried out to be free from sexual addictions and the belief that I couldn't possibly be used by God because of my sin-stained past. That night, Marty gave me something I hadn't had since I was a kid. He gave me back myself. By asking judgement-free questions and listening patiently, he opened the door so that the little boy in me could feel safe and come out of hiding.

By repeatedly asking, "What does your spirit say about all this?" he encouraged me to confront the lies of the enemy. He helped me listen directly to the voice of God that was always speaking the truth: "You are loved," "You are forgiven," "You are a new creation through Christ Jesus," "You are more than a conqueror," "You are stronger than this," "You are a man of God."

It's one thing to read these words in the Bible. It's another to be told this by someone you love. Hearing those words well-up inside of me, at the exact moment I needed the truth, was life-changing.

Marty tag-teamed with the Holy Spirit and committed to making sure my spirit was liberated. He called me weekly, sent encouraging texts, mailed me spiritual books, joined me in doing Bible App plans, and invited me to the Community Festivals he helps run across Japan. He meant it when he said, "I am absolutely committed to seeing you free!"

OVERVIEW OF A MENTORING PROCESS

I've had men passionate about pursuing God in close proximity to me before, but Marty was one of the first men to be just as passionate about my life and my role in the Kingdom as he was his own, and committed to helping me grow as a man of God.

Simply by consistently communicating with me, loving me, and involving himself in my life, Marty healed the deep-seated mistrust I had of men and the fatherless spirit I had nursed since my parents divorced at age eleven.

He helped me escape from addiction to sex, pornography, and masturbation, which the enemy was using to rob me of my peace and potential. Marty helped me to believe I am not meant to be a lukewarm, powerless Christian, but I am called to be a kingdom-builder, to help rescue others from darkness, like Jesus did for me.

One of the greatest blessings I have ever received is my mentor because he has made the love of the Father, the steadfastness of Jesus, and the consistency of the Holy Spirit so very real for me. And as a result, I, also, am committed to helping others step into the light by encouraging them to listen to the ever-present Spirit of God that lives within us!

THE FLOW OF MENTORING

My goal in mentoring is to help grow mentees into the men and women God's created them to be. I find this most effectively takes place as they see and remove blockages from within so they can hear the voice of God and find their story.

From the outset, I want to unroll the model of mentoring that I use. Hopefully it will provide a framework. My hope is it assists you to find your way into mentoring or provides some more ideas if you're already underway. Below is the flow of a mentoring session. Nothing is prescriptive. Each mentoring occasion is as unique as

the individual being mentored. It's an approach, a guide, perhaps even an anchor to hold on to as you help mentees explore their lives.

CREATE A CLIMATE FOR GROWING

For mentoring to be effective I am always seeking to create a safe open space.

As Rod wrote in his book, *The Heart of Education*, "Climate is everything. If there is a cheerful spirit of hope and goodwill, the climate will instill values intuitively, unconsciously. It's like breathing, it's happening all the time. Such a climate allows the Spirit of God, the breath of God blowing free, full rein."⁵

To create this climate, it helps to be warm, friendly, and non-judgmental. If I am able to be like this, I give space for the Spirit of God to be *blowing free*. I invite the Holy Spirit to take over. I want nothing to feel forced. I can't make it happen. I want to simply turn up, enjoy the ride and provide a sounding board for mentees to explore their inner world.

I like to think of the opening minutes as me bringing some *social oil* to our meeting. I ask questions – how was their last week? What has been a highlight? I'm listening to what is happening in their world. They're important rituals in an unfolding process.

Often, expectancy fills the room (or Zoom call). We are ready. "The stage is now yours," I tell them, "Go wherever you want, talk about what you like. It's your time." It's clear what my job is. It's to listen. I seek to draw close to them, leaving preconceptions behind. Any questions I do ask in this early part of the process are general and very open.

I'm trying to see them as best I can, seeking to hear what is truly happening in their world. It can't be rushed.

*To know there is a soft place when I talk with you blows
my mind. It expands me, expands my relationships.*

I picture myself rowing around the island looking for the best possible landing place, making a bridgehead into what we could explore. Each time is different. I listen for emotions. Most of my mentoring takes place through asking questions and listening. I may ask, “What is there you want to celebrate?” This helps get their spirit engaged. It flows. You can’t push a river.

Here are some examples of questions as I begin:

- ✦ Where are you? (Such a powerful “open” question. God asks it of Adam and Eve as he looks for them in Genesis chapter 3.)
- ✦ What is life like for you on the inside?
- ✦ What would you like to explore today?
- ✦ What would you like to celebrate since we last met?
- ✦ How are you and God going?

NURTURING COMMITMENT TO THE JOURNEY

1. *Developing an Iron Will*

The posture I desire in my mentees and within me is seen in the story of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi. He turns and faces Jerusalem, the city where He will suffer. Luke writes, “He moved steadily onward toward Jerusalem **with an iron will**” (Luke 9:51 TLB, emphasis mine).

Other translations write that, “He steadfastly set His face” (KJV), “determined” (TLV), “intently” (WEB), “resolutely” (NIV), and “steeled Himself” (MSG).

Assisting mentees to discover this iron will I seek to make a priority. It’s fascinating that the words of the “Suffering Servant” include, “Therefore, have I set my face like flint ...” (Isaiah 50:7). Flint was the hardest rock in the desert. This verse emphasises the

resolution the coming Messiah would show. Setting your face like flint is different from making New Year's resolutions. It's a resolution for sure, but there's no half-heartedness here. No matter what comes, you're going to Jerusalem. It's a given.

Where does this iron will come from? It's our willing spirit deep within powering us forward. It's God-given, yet it involves both God and us working together. Paul writes, "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12b- 13). We need to strengthen a resolve to keep the flesh under control, while remaining open to God, others, and ourselves.

It's important to ensure our *yes* means *yes* and our *no* means *no* (James 5:12). I encourage mentees to have a clear purpose, a commitment to being truthful to themselves. Our flesh will do anything to deceive, confuse and take us away from our purpose and calling.

One mentee wrote:

I gave God my yes. It was the most courageous thing I've ever done. Once I opened the door to Jesus I couldn't go back. I was boldly determined. I developed an iron will. I saw how it could only take one yes to the flesh for me to lose my way, so I moved to the offensive. I am determined to stay here and give this battle my best each day.

The best way I can summarise these choices is from the title of Eugene Peterson's book that describes discipleship as a "long obedience in the same direction."⁶

2. *Dying to the Flesh*

My most used verse in mentoring is Jesus' words in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus awakens his three disciples, reminding them, "The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41). It's a

profound truth. How is it possible to hear your spirit if the power of the flesh is overtaking you?

Effective mentoring helps mentees explore what's within them that gets in the way of their freedom. Awareness precedes change. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to "... throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles ..." (Hebrews 12:1). This *throwing off* may not take place in every mentoring session but it's often an important part of our time together.

There is so much dying to be done. I recall four words God spoke to me, "You die, I bless!" Paul writes, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). And so, says Paul, "Every day I die" (1 Corinthians 15:31 ESV).

Dying to the flesh involves taking on the accusing voices of the evil one. It involves leaving the past. Often, it leads to confession to clear out the old. James writes, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

3. *Confession Brings Healing*

As mentees choose to open up there's often a prolonged silence, a struggle within. It costs to speak of pain, to disclose sin. Yet when light shines in the darkness something beautiful emerges. Often, there's a freedom, relief, a deep joy as the past is left behind. We explore this further in Chapter 11.

Bringing your sins into the sunlight is the best disinfectant.

To facilitate the process, I ask questions like:

- ♦ Would you like to share (and celebrate) battles you are winning? And ones that are not simple at the moment?
- ♦ How are you doing in the battle with your flesh?

- If the connection between us is strong, I ask, “How would you feel telling me what you don’t want to tell me?”
- What did you learn from what has taken place?

Morgan Snyder writes, “It takes a lot of crap to make good soil – it’s the way of nature and the way of the Kingdom.”⁷ What a great line!

HELPING MENTEES HEAR THEIR SPIRIT

Much of mentoring is about sharpening and bringing clarity to the battle going on internally between flesh and spirit. Taking on the flesh is hard work. The flesh is more often closer to the surface than our spirit, shouting louder, demanding our attention. It needs to be dealt with first. As it’s disengaged (for a while at least,) we witness something profound unfolding – an emerging, uncovering, of our real self. That part, at the core of us, is made in the image of God. It’s our willing spirit.

Paul writes in Romans 8:

This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It’s adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike ‘What’s next, Papa?’ **God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are.** We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children (Romans 8:15-16 MSG, emphasis mine).

The NIV translates verse 16, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” An Australian translation, the Plain English Version, says, “His Spirit in us talks to our own spirits, and He tells us, “That is right, you really are God’s kids” (Romans 8:15-16 PEV).

I’m helping mentees search for their spirit and support them exploring, going deeper and drawing it out. Paul writes to the

Corinthians, “For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them?” (1 Corinthians 2:11) Four chapters later he writes, “He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Corinthians 6:17 ESV). Paul tells the Romans that he “serves God with his spirit” (Romans 1:9 ESV).

Jesus reveals how to worship, “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24 ESV). Elihu, the more constructive friend of Job, explains what the spirit does, “It is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives understanding” (Job 32:8).

Our spirit is an access point to God. If there’s space for our spirit, it will be heard. When it’s recognised, nurtured and trusted, our spirit grows stronger, becoming more present and available. We are all made with a longing for the transcendent. Our spirit seeks it. It’s what is behind our prayers and our worship. This longing is natural, intuitive, and in Jesus’ words, *willing*. Paul writes, “Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In my experience, when we make space to hear our spirit by quieting the noise from our body and soul, we’re empowered to take responsibility for our own life and behaviour. We’re strengthened to choose. I catch myself smiling (even laughing) as I experience my spirit and I hear the spirit of the mentees. Celebration comes from the human spirit. If our spirit is around, there’s celebration and freedom. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

The more you hear your spirit, the more you will be amazed with the wisdom and life that flows. “The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord that sheds light on one’s innermost being” (Proverbs 20:27). “A healthy spirit conquers adversity” (Proverbs 18:15 MSG). Like Mary, your “spirit (will) rejoice in God (your) Saviour” (Luke 1:47).

As they begin to hear their spirit, I ask questions such as:

- ✦ What does your spirit long for more than anything else in the world?
- ✦ What does your spirit want to say to God?
- ✦ What is your spirit saying to you?

When I speak with you, I leave differently from when I came. I feel both stirred up and filled up with my spirit.

HELPING THEM HEAR FROM THE FATHER

God wants to *father us*. “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Galatians 4:4-6). This is who we are, adopted as His children. This spirit of *sonship* is in our hearts. Dive into it and it changes everything. We can hear the Father speaking. There’s no going back.

One mentee told me that what he’s learnt most from our times is how to listen to God. Most mentoring times I attempt to give an opportunity for mentees to hear what the Father wants to say to them. God is willing to speak. I want to help them find how they can be better positioned to hear what He’s saying. Sometimes it’s a gentle whisper, sometimes a loud roar, sometimes an image, sometimes a direct word from Scripture.

A guy I was mentoring felt he wanted to have a break from God. He asked me to not ask him questions that would put him in touch with his spirit. He said, *If I listen to my spirit, I will hear what God is saying and I don’t want to hear God.*

What is helpful in hearing from God is to trust that He will lead you. Invite Him to speak and then wait. He wants to talk to His children. The question and the challenge is do we believe it is possible to hear His voice?

I want to help mentees come to our time with an expectancy that God will speak, “My own sheep will hear my voice and I know each one, and they will follow me.” (John 10:27 TPT). “Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go” (Proverbs 3:7 MSG).

To assist the process, I begin with a question: “What is God saying to your spirit?” I wait for a response. I can never anticipate what happens. It’s always unique. I sometimes ask, “How does God the Father feel about you?” Often there’s a warm sigh with an accompanying, thankful smile. A deeper connection is taking place. I can only affirm and encourage them.

You helped me see how God feels about me. Knowing that changed me.

There are times I observe God speaking directly to mentees about anger, depression or something to do with their frustrations. I sit back watching as they hear the Father speaking. Sometimes it feels we are both walking under an open heaven. Paul writes, “Now that you’ve found you don’t have to listen to sin tell you what to do, **and have discovered the delight of listening to God telling you, what a surprise!** A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way!” (Romans 6:22-23 MSG, emphasis mine)

Our spirit not only helps us hear God, it expands our experience of Him, so we can actually feel His love. This is a reality that changes lives. Paul describes it, “We can now experience the endless love of God cascading into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who lives in us!” (Romans 5:5 TPT).

INTEGRATION IS THE GOAL

The Psalmist encourages us to “have an undivided heart” (Psalms 88:11). The Living Bible renders it, “May every fibre of my being unite in reverence to your name.” The goal of mentoring is

integration. I often find mentees make great progress in a number of areas in their lives, yet unresolved areas lie within. Over time we seek to go back and gently pick up those unfinished parts, so that all of them can move forward as one. Paul prays we will be “made whole body, soul and spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). That’s integration.

Our spirit being allowed to be the integrating part of us, brings us freedom. We come alive. We want to hear and obey Him. It is shalom- everything in its right place. In mentoring I am not trying to fix them. I long for them to be truly themselves. In hearing our spirit and living from there we become separate and integrated, made more complete. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Be complete as God is complete” (Matthew 5:48 OJB). Living like this, we lack nothing.

It feels good, gradually pieces are being recovered and integrated within me.

This then is a taster of what awaits in the pages ahead. Enjoy the journey.

3

GROWTH

You don't grow old. You get old by not growing

— E. Stanley Jones

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new

— Dan Millman

When I understand that everything happening to me is to make me more Christlike, it resolves a great deal of anxiety

— A.W. Tozer

The Path to completion passes through the doorway of self-acceptance

— Carl Jung

A mentee shares how mentoring helped him grow:

Frustrated with my life I began searching for a mentor. A friend told me about Marty. I met him and asked, "Can you help me grow? I'm not being truly me or living my calling." I sensed that, somehow, Marty could help me. We connected quickly, and I chose to tell him about my past. I looked good, yet underneath a respectable layer was deep pain. Up to the age of 8 I was a confident little boy, good at sports, and loved life.

Unfortunately, that confidence would be shaken by a life-changing experience. I was bullied, not by other students, but by a teacher. He was both physically and verbally abusive. Each day I counted every second till school finished. I was horrified and traumatised by what he said and did to me and others. I had no reference to know how to process it. I lost my sense of self. I withdrew inside myself to escape the pain.

I recall walking home from school one day and hearing a voice within me saying, "It's going to be fine; you will get free from this situation." I made a commitment that day that whatever happened, I would listen to that voice. When I look back now, I know now it was the voice of my spirit.

Sadly, another round of bullying happened through a youth worker who shamed me for not being able to go to school and being academically challenged. I blamed myself. I lived in a fog. I thought, is this what it's going to be like for the rest of my life? God heard my cry. I was fifteen. I asked my parents if I could leave Japan. Remarkably, they agreed. They wanted to do anything to help. I headed to Canada.

From the moment I arrived it was game on! I was going to grow. My perspective expanded. I met crazy people who loved God.

Increasingly, I knew who I wanted to be. I thrived with friends at school. I even ended up in university. I experienced a whole new freedom. I moved to Australia to a discipleship school. In that time, I learnt to be even more “me” than I’d ever experienced. I learnt to trust people.

Although I could have stayed in Australia, I couldn’t ignore the voice within telling me it was time to return to Japan and face my past. Spontaneously, I purchased a one-way ticket. It was hard. I felt both fear and excitement, yet that choice became my path to transformation.

I started talking to Marty. Together we unpacked the impact of bullying and the power of accusing voices. I didn’t hold back from the pain and the flood of anger. Often, I would weep, anything to get it out. I remember hearing a voice saying, “Don’t conform your soul, your identity, to what others want. Don’t give in, be yourself.” I’m so thankful I fought for my freedom. Some wanted me to give in, to conform, but I couldn’t.

I recall returning to where I grew up. With my mum I decided to return to the school where the abuse took place. It was scary. I hadn’t been there for over 12 years. We prayed together. There were tears. I walked around outside the school. I was confronting my biggest ghosts. As we left, I told my mother, “I’m free! I’ve won the battle.”

Now, I accept my broken self that once I’d been ashamed of. This fierce desire to grow has made the difference. I know now that I can’t stop growing. I am choosing to stay in Japan, live in community, and keep facing each challenge as it comes. This trauma from bullying has become a holy wound. It’s helped me find and live my truest story. It’s no longer a curse. I have moved from being the one I hate to the one I like ... and yes, even love.

HELP PEOPLE GROW

In our Youth and Community organisation, we were searching for a phrase to summarise how we wanted to come alongside young people. We adopted:

Build people up.
Help people grow
Because people matter.

We would use it to set the *norms* at any youth event we would run. It became our mantra, reminding us how we could help every young person grow. It developed further into creating small groups we'd refer to as HOG – "Helping others grow."

Socrates believed the unexamined life was not worth living. I want my life to be worth living. I want to help mentees live an *examined* life. St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 394) offered a beautiful, succinct, and useful definition of sin. "Sin," he [suggested] "is a refusal to keep growing."⁸

DO YOU WANT TO GROW?

A friend asked me what percentage of people did I believe really wanted to grow. I assumed it would be at least 20%, maybe more. I'm an optimist and many of the friends around me have, as a strong value, a desire to grow. He believed not even 5% of people want to grow.

I remember my sadness when my dad told me, "I don't want to change, I don't want to grow." Understanding his past helped me show grace, yet I wanted him to know there was more he could experience.

It's easy to be full of good intentions about growing. I catch it in myself; Lose weight, get fit, spend more time with God. No doubt you have your list. Mal would often say, "Intentions don't guarantee performance."

I recall discovering Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*. It was a catalyst for my commitment to growing. I was challenged by a quote in his introduction from Tolstoy, "Everybody thinks of changing humanity, and nobody thinks of changing themselves." Foster continues, "Our world is hungry for genuinely changed people ... Let us be among those who believe that the inner transformation of our lives is a goal worthy of our best effort."⁹ Early in my Christian life I read a book titled, *Holiness*. J.C. Ryle says, "He must dig down very deep if he wants to build high."¹⁰ This is how I want to live.

Snyder expresses it this way, "We come to the sobering reality that we cannot build before we have properly excavated ... we must give our strength to the sacred work of excavating before we can participate with God in the process of building in His way and in His time."¹¹

THE COST OF GROWTH

Perhaps the reason why many are not enamoured with the idea of growing is that it costs. If you don't want to take responsibility for your personal growth, it won't happen. Growth remains then, a good idea, a *helpful* ideal. Growth rarely happens instantly. Snyder writes, "Growth is change. Change is hard. It costs us. We resist it. The best things in life take time."¹²

What the ego hates more than anything else is to change. W.H. Auden notes, "We would rather be ruined than changed. We would rather die in our dread than climb the cross of the moment and let our illusions die."¹³ I wish it was as simple as saying, "Say a little prayer to Jesus, it will be alright."

To grow you need to be intentional. You can't grow and be comfortable at the same time. Motivational speaker, Brian Tracy wrote, "You will either step forward into growth, or you will step backward into safety."¹⁴ In mentoring, some want to grow, while others resist. Some individuals progress well, then withdraw – it

seems too difficult. I recall a mother pleading with me to help her son get off drugs. In her mind, I had such a gift that a 10-minute talk would convince him. The reality was very different. While we spent time talking, the bottom line was he didn't want to give up drugs; he didn't want to change.

Growth is directly related to a willingness to endure the cost of change. It's facing your biggest fears and saying, "Whatever it takes, I am going to do it."

DEFINING GROWTH

Growth is becoming separate. It is creating healthy boundaries – helping you to strengthen your ability to make choices that bring life. It's offering the best version of yourself. Growth is a willingness to be transparent, real, and authentic. It's committing to bringing unresolved issues into the light. Dan Allender says that the "disentangling of the true person from a defensive style of relating is the thrilling work of Christian growth."¹⁵

Growth is having a right picture of yourself. Paul writes, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you." (Romans 12:3)

An important goal of growth is self-awareness; being relaxed, in touch with your feelings, open to seeing new things, aware of how we may be coming across to others. The Psalmist wants to grow, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24). Spiritual maturity is not being perfect. Rather, it is knowing the will of God and choosing to respond to it. It is becoming who you truly are.

James captures the goal of growth, "So you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way" (James 1:4 MSG). The Living Bible has, "Then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete." We play our part in growth, yet Paul

reminds us how growth ultimately happens, when he says, “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Growth happens best in an authentic community; a theme throughout this book. We need a welcoming, growth-promoting environment, where we are safe to explore and where we know we don’t have to get everything right. Richard Rohr writes that, “The only people who change, who are transformed, are people who feel safe, who feel their dignity, and who feel loved. When you feel loved, when you feel safe, and when you know your dignity, you just keep growing!”¹⁶

It’s challenging and courageous to trust yourself to a mentoring relationship, especially with someone you don’t know. Yet, if the commitment to growing wins over any impulse to avoid or run away, I am confident mentees will make it.

Sometimes moments come in life that ask you if you want to grow. My nephew and his wife nearly lost their three-month old daughter to a heart attack. Prior to this, he reports he was a pretty typical guy, hiding what was really going on for him. Now his growth is off the chart. He challenges me about ways I relate in our family.

I realised it was hard to truly grow and know what I wanted to do if I was unable to answer the question of who I am. Parker J Palmer communicates it as, “The deepest vocational question is not, ‘What ought I to do with my life?’ It is the more elemental and demanding ‘Who am I? What is my nature?’ We’ve got to get our own who right before we can begin to address the question of what am I to do.”¹⁷

I can’t do it on my own. I need to know who I am. I need brothers and sisters. I need God.

ENJOYING BEING YOU

One of the most effective ways to measure growth is by asking how comfortable you are with yourself. Can you look at yourself in the mirror and say, “This is me, I am OK. I like being me.” I recall teaching a high school student who was thin. He always seemed happy and accepted himself. In physical education classes he’d smile as he took his shirt off. I remember him telling me, “I just like being myself.”

I was with a mentee when I left my phone in a taxi. He was amazed how I was smiling and relaxed when I realised what I’d done. He asked me why I wasn’t more stressed. I smiled and told him, “I’m friends with myself so I don’t give myself a hard time ... besides I forget things so often I choose to not worry about it.”

The ability to love yourself is intimately related to your capacity to love others. If you feel safe and secure, then you can manage those inner struggles, and you can see others. Jesus’ words are all too true, “love others as you love yourself” (Matthew 22:39). It’s a challenge to see the good in others if you can’t see it in yourself. It’s a challenge to truly help others till you like yourself. If you can encounter yourself in a softer, forgiving way, that’s growth.

MENTORING AND GROWTH

Mentoring and growth are synonymous. Helping people grow is what I am about. I observe how some mentees come with a burning desire to grow, while others are happy to have more of a slight brush with growth. A thirst for growth, a fierce commitment to growing, sparks a flame that transforms lives. Those who gain most from mentoring give themselves fully to the process, choosing to not hold back or be guarded.

One mentee struggling with life told me, *I need your help to grow up*. This level of commitment means mentees are willing to be

honest, humble, teachable, vulnerable, and transparent. Growth is contagious. I watch you growing. I want to do it too.

I see how much you want me to grow. It calls me out to want to help others grow.

At times I'm gently *pushing* them to grow, while others appreciate and respond to a kick in the butt. Mentoring is a mutual relationship where growth is the binding force between mentor and mentee. I return to the question regularly that hangs over mentoring times, "Do you want to grow?"

AN ATTITUDE OF GROWTH

The famous Russian author, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was arrested and imprisoned for criticising Stalin. He wrote how unimaginably hard the experience was. Despite that, he said, "Bless you prison, bless you for being in my life. For there, lying upon the rotting prison straw, I came to realise that the object of life is not prosperity as we are made to believe, but the maturity of the human soul."¹⁸ Now that is a strong spirit!

You know you're growing when you're determined to learn from every situation and circumstance. If a relationship doesn't work out, what can you learn that will benefit you next time? There is something freeing, liberating, even redemptive about this attitude. Alternatively, if you come from a place where you feel you "know it all," then it is hard to grow. A truth in mentoring is "you always make clear what you mean by what you do." I see it in mentees actions or inactions. If there's avoidance, and reluctance I know they're not truly willing. I am grateful when mentees arrive with an attitude of "if this is what will help me grow then I am going to do it." I watch them willingly give up time with friends, wake up early, or take time off work to speak with me.

I don't care what it is going to take, I just want to grow.

We strengthen our posture of growing by committing to it. If you approach mentoring willing to let the drawbridge down, committed to being humble and to a total transparency, you will make great progress.

You can ask me anything, speak into my life. I'll hold nothing back.

I am just tired of working on my stuff by myself. I am ready to grow.

Why can I help mentees? Sure, I have skills like listening, yet I feel it is my own commitment to growing that is most significant. I like this part of me that wants to grow. I really like it. This thirst to grow led me to see a therapist on three occasions. I wanted to uncover anything I couldn't see or I was running from. I wouldn't give up. It's made the difference.

This commitment to growing allows me to do all I can to help those who entrust themselves to me in a mentoring relationship. If mentees have a strong desire to grow, they will grow.

FLESH VERSUS SPIRIT

Growth is about having more of your spirit available to support and strengthen you. It happens as you fight back in the spirit versus the flesh battle. Our spirit is willing to assist us to grow. It cheers us on. The flesh? It wants nothing whatsoever to do with growth. It cares simply about maximising pleasure and minimising pain.

I asked a mentee if he wanted to grow. His reply came:

Sometimes. My flesh is resistant. Yet, I can hear my spirit reminding me that the best moments of my life are when I let both Jesus and the Father in, and we work together. This is what I want more of.

Growth is about your spirit becoming more accessible, more able to strengthen you in the battle. The more available your spirit, the more you will want to grow.

Our spirit urges us to grow. As M. Scott Peck writes:

We all have a sick self and a healthy self. No matter how neurotic or psychotic we may be, even if we seem to be totally fearful and completely rigid, there is still a small part of us, however small, that wants us to grow, that likes change and development, that is attracted to the new and the unknown, and that is willing to do the work and take the risks involved in spiritual growth.¹⁹

Here is our dilemma. A part of us, cheered on by our spirit, wants to grow. Another part wants to stay in a pale grey world, not really good enough to be good or bad enough to be bad. It seeks to resist any attempt to grow.

A WILLING SPIRIT

Where does this desire to grow come from? I hold onto (daily) Jesus' words that our spirit is willing. A willing spirit is the most significant ingredient required for growth. Mentoring helps mentees to hear their spirit and to have it more accessible and available for any situations they encounter.

A willing spirit is not only found in the words of Jesus as He cries out to his three friends at Gethsemane. David pleads for it and Moses observes it in a moment where the Israelites are obedient. David after confessing his adultery with Bathsheba cries out in the words of Psalm 51, "Grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (Psalms 51:12).

It's our willing spirit that sustains, frees, and supports us to choose the right way. It helps us choose growing over withdrawing. With the building of the Tabernacle, "Everyone came whose heart was stirred, and **everyone whose spirit was willing,**

and they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle" (Exodus 35:20 ESV, emphasis mine).

What is so helpful about a strong willing spirit? It gives you the power and strength to do what is needed in the moment. Nebuchadnezzar says, as he sees Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego still alive in the fiery furnace, "They trusted in God and defied the king's command and were **willing** to give up their lives ..." (Daniel 3:28, emphasis mine). A freed, willing, spirit empowers us to do whatever it takes. It's not scared to take on the noise of the soul.

Are you willing to ask God to motivate you to help you find the truest expression of you? Are you ready to pray, 'Lord, make me willing?'

The chapters ahead explore pathways on strengthening this willing spirit within us so it is strong and readily available.

RELATING TO GOD

God is most interested in our growth. He is constantly encouraging us, setting up opportunities for us to grow. The prayer He loves answering is, "God change me, grow me." God challenges us to grow, each of us in our own unique ways. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to, "Fully embrace God's correction as part of your training, for he is doing what any loving father does for his children. For who has ever heard of a child who never had to be corrected?" (Hebrews 12:7 TPT).

I am committed to growing. I don't want to settle or stagnate in my relationship with the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. I want to go deeper, to find deeper freedom, joy and hope in Him. I know if I do this, I will be in a strong place to give myself to others.

TRUST

Trust is foundational for growth. Our own history means it is not always easy for people to quickly move to trust. As trust builds, mentees are freer to speak of their fears. More of their withheld self comes to the light.

In his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey talks about trust as currency in relationships:

If I make deposits into an Emotional Bank Account with you through courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping my commitments to you, I build up a reserve. Your trust toward me becomes higher, and I can call upon that trust many times if I need to. I can even make mistakes and that trust level, that emotional reserve, will compensate for it.²⁰

There are actions as a mentor I can take that helps build trust with mentees. I make a point of being there when I say I will and giving myself to them. I am genuinely interested in mentees and their growth. I try to serve them. I pray regularly for them. This helps contribute to our trust account growing.

I can trust you. I feel a pure love you have for me. I know you want to help me grow. I feel no judgement.

I trust you. You don't question my motives or my values. My spirit picked up on that; it's safe to express itself.

What helps me trust you is your friendliness and consistency. I don't have to wonder which Marty I'm going to get. There is no question of you being here for me. You show up with authentic enthusiasm and interest in my world. It's been a wonderfully corrective experience being with someone who loves me for my own sake. That helps me trust you.

In our youth work training an important goal was that students display an ability to live with ambiguities and approximations in their life until the final goal could be realised. Rohr expresses it like this, “The people who hold the contradictions and resolve them in themselves ... are the only real agents of transformation, reconciliation, and newness.”²¹

Whether it’s been training youth workers or mentoring, what lies behind so much of what I do is this question—do you want to grow? In the Book of Job there are two powerful growth prayers. Job humbly prays the first one, “Show me where I have been wrong” (Job 6:24). The second growth prayer is from Elihu, Job’s more helpful friend. He prays, “Teach me what I cannot see ...” (Job 34:32). That is what we need to grow. To get there it takes a humble, willing spirit.

Nicky Gumbel comments on growth, “It’s like a journey. You progress one step at a time. What matters is not so much how far you have got – but that you are heading in the right direction and that you keep going.”²² Keep chiselling away. God is forging us. See the challenging times as an opportunity. We connect far more with each other through pain than any other way. I remind myself again it is a determined, willing spirit that is needed to grow.

“Do you truly long to change the way you live? Do you come to life with a desire to grow? Do you want to grow? I hear my spirit shouting, “Come on!” I want to grow.

I recall one young man recovering from a particularly painful relationship. It had taken him over two years to be ready to talk. Now he wanted to fight for his freedom. We met weekly. He always came with an intense determination, a fighting spirit. It was hard for him yet he wouldn’t give up. I wrote a poem about his journey:

Over the last 15 weeks
We’ve gone into the ring.
Well you have.

GROWTH

I watched from the ropes
cheering
as wholeheartedly you entered into battle.
Raw determination
accompanying each round.
You'd keep saying, "Whatever it will take."
Battered, knocked down.
everything brought to the light.
Darkness retreated.
You named, faced, fought against
anything blocking freedom's call.
There were times it seemed you'd been taken out.
Round after round.
Punch after punch.
I saw your tears.
I wanted to charge into the ring.
Yet I knew you would shout, "No,
This is my journey.
Marty, I have to do this."

Each week I witnessed you
courageously putting your gloves back on,
returning to the ring.
"I will never give up.
I have to win this battle."
I watched your courage.
God saw it
He heard your cry.
You fought hard
and you made it
If I feel proud of you,
how much more our Father.
The fruit of the wrestle.

A WILLING SPIRIT

The holy grail.
A victory won.
A new man.
Yet a knowing.
Other battles await.

PART 2

Mentoring Overview

AN INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING

Mentoring is a sanctified friendship with someone further down the sacred path than their mentee

— A mentee

Strengthen and build up the faith of your brothers

— Luke 22:32 TLB

Paul gave constant encouragement, lifting their spirits and charging them with fresh hope

— Acts 20:1 MSG

WITHOUT MY MENTOR

I wouldn't know that men who hunger for God
fast not only from food, but hot
showers, too. I wouldn't be able to describe
the difference between soul, body, & spirit.
I wouldn't know there's a difference between spirit
& Spirit & both live within to teach, comfort,
& guide me. I wouldn't rise before sunrise everyday
expecting to hear from God when I pray & ask,
What does my spirit say? I wouldn't have gone
on a three day trip, alone, to a deserted mountain village,
to celebrate God. I wouldn't actively search for guys to mentor
because I'd think, What do I have to offer? I wouldn't have completed
the 33 Minute Warrior Bible Plan—which I've done four times
with four different guys! I wouldn't have hundreds of emails about
devotionals
purity, & poetry. I wouldn't know what it feels like for someone to
cheer for my poems
louder than my mother. I would miss out on late night phone calls
about T.S. Eliot,
Watchman Nee, Black Lives Matter, the 2020/2021 Olympics,
& the imminent revival in Japan. I wouldn't have a brother who I can
text anytime
about the fresh snow in the school courtyard, the Japanese
exam I failed,
my wandering eyes. I would still be in bondage
to porn & masturbation. I would still believe the lies
that I'm less of a man. Too broken.
& literally 120 other lies I'd accepted about myself
from The Enemy. I wouldn't be able to hope
for a wife who would love me
despite my messy past. I wouldn't look in the mirror
each morning & say, I am a son, a man, forgiven, loved.

I would understand God as Lord,
but not as Father. My spirit—that bright-eyed
& always smiling boy—
would not be free.

— *Anonymous*

A mentee writes of the impact of mentoring on him:

I met Marty when he lived in Germany. I discovered a passionate and good listener. To be asked by someone about your dreams, to be taken seriously and to be listened to, became a strong base for trust to build. In fact, the day I was asked what was “my deepest desire for life” was the day I called Marty “mentor” in my journal.

At this time, my life seemed okay, yet deep within I knew I wasn’t truly free. I carried unresolved feelings in my soul. There seemed something I just didn’t get – a never-ending fog blocking the free man I could be. My actions were too-often driven by emotional distress or unresolved issues from my childhood. An inner voice, it seemed, would speak without much hope – “I don’t belong here.”

I grew up in a black and white world. There seemed nothing colourful – nothing in-between. I shared this journey with Marty who would smile at seeing me own what was going on. That was the point where mentoring really began to affect me: a never-ending encouragement and passion by someone who pushed me to look behind the fog, to feel my personal heartbeat and to have my spirit as the integrating part of me. Connecting with and trusting my spirit helped widen my sight. I discovered a bigger picture.

Authentic things in my life happen when I have enough inner space and self-confidence. That may explain a bit more why it was so helpful to have someone calling my spirit out. This was unexpected. Marty patiently kept asking, “You are clever in mind, but what’s your spirit saying? Find it, listen to it. It’s a voice that calls you out.” The voice of my true self became louder – the smokescreen gave way. There were times I would cry, laugh and then cry again as my concept of self began to wobble. Hope would rise.

A WILLING SPIRIT

There is something liberating to have your spirit taken seriously. It brought me in touch with God. I see now I was figuring out what was already lying there, waiting to be discovered.

Being encouraged to connect to my inner-self became a means, step-by-step, to find God's unconditional love. It was the inner voice of freedom, already there, that simply needed to be listened to. I would describe it as an opening to a lifelong process of becoming more alive, dissipating fears, accepting grace, receiving self-acceptance. In short, becoming more truly me.

I was highly motivated by this man who did not stop cheering me on, "Good on ya! Isn't it great what you've learnt today!" I knew he meant it. Slowly I began to find my calling.

I discovered good mentoring was asking questions that bring issues to the forefront where they could come into the light. He listened deeply without evaluating and with an open heart (not a pretend interest). I learnt to be patient with myself. He would not give answers that I could find myself.

We caught up regularly. I experienced his commitment to me. He celebrated each success. Somehow, despite the age difference we were on the same level. We didn't have to try too hard, I wasn't forced or convinced into anything. He was an authentic partner, a guide who really cared. I was not a client. I was supported by someone who really felt with me. I see how conversation techniques and methods are important for mentoring but it is more important to walk through a process together – to intentionally go on a real journey. This is love.

I won't forget the day I saw tears in Marty's eyes as he told me he saw my pain, my bruises. He cried with me. To be real is more important than being perfect. Through it all, we became friends and brothers. God sent others in different phases of my life. They were

*angels in disguise. Some may not know their part in my journey.
An aunt who loved me, a teacher in school seeing more in me, a
leader of the Salvation Army talking to my father, and most of all,
my fantastic wife!*

WHAT IS A MENTOR

Have you ever been hiking in an area by yourself, then later returned with an experienced hiker – someone who knows and loves the land? Their insight and passion about what you have already seen, opens your eyes to appreciating it even more.

A mentor is like that experienced hiker. They're aware of (a few) more things than their mentee – for they've travelled the path a little longer. Knowing this gives the mentee more confidence to trust the hiker and the guardrails they provide.

Mentor, in Homer's *Odyssey*, was the name of the wise, trusted companion and friend of Ulysses while he was away for ten years at the Trojan wars. He was the teacher and adviser of Ulysses' son, Telemachus, helping him develop his values and attitudes so he could become a well-rounded adult. A mentor seeks to support the mentee as their spirit connects to God, so they become defined more by their spirit, than their past.

I wonder what feeling comes from within you when you hear the word *mentoring*? For some it's a feeling of uncertainty- what actually is it. Is it formal or informal? Is it just talking to people? Others have negative emotions they carry because the "mentoring" they've experienced has been more about control and being told what to do, even manipulated to act in a certain way. One guy told me in his country mentoring is more like, "*You had better not mess it up or I will give you a ride in the boot of my car ...*" For others it's a neutral feeling. It's not something that's been part of their lives, not something they have thought about often. Finally, there are those who have a more positive experience and understanding of

what mentoring is and even feel an *inner glow* as they reflect on their own mentoring or their mentoring of others.

FOUR FACETS OF MENTORING

Over these next few chapters I am seeking to build a broad picture of mentoring through stories, my own reflections, and reflections from mentees, and from the Word of God. I have found the opening verses of Hebrews 12 contains a useful summary of the nature of mentoring.

1. *Celebrating and Cheering*

The Bible doesn't make clear the extent to which those in heaven are aware of us on earth. However, verse 1 says, "Pioneers who blazed the way ... these veterans cheering us on ..." (Hebrews 12:1 MSG). This is what mentors do – they celebrate what is going on for the mentee. Not too many people feel celebrated. They can feel unwanted or unseen. To be celebrated is healing and empowering.

You relentlessly cheer me on in all parts of my life.

2. *Dying to the Flesh*

Bringing things into the light, exposing the flesh is another pillar of mentoring. "The spirit is willing the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). To hear our spirit clearly, it's imperative to directly confront the reality of our flesh. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us, "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1). The Passion Translation says, "So we must let go of every wound that has pierced us ..."

Your spirit comes alive and is more available to you as you die to your flesh. It is this truth that permeates the book.

3. Discovering your Uniqueness

Once their spirit is free and winning over the flesh, mentees can discover and appreciate their unique narrative. “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1). God is the “Author,” the One who has given us our story to run our race.

Mentoring is helping people find their narrative so they don’t lose the “plot” and miss out on the assignment God has for them. Paul says, “My life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned to me by the Lord” (Acts 20:24 NLT). A mentor helps focus the mentee’s journey. You can’t do it for them—but it can make a huge difference to support them as they find their distinctive story.

4. Pointing them to Jesus

What is the best means to help them find their story? Point them to Jesus. “Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it” (Hebrews 12:2 MSG). We support and encourage them to fix their eyes on the ultimate role model, the One who has gone before us, the One above anyone we learn from. “Go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility He ploughed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!” (Hebrews 12:3 MSG)

We are called to identify with Jesus – to locate within us what we see in Him. We want more of Jesus to be integrated into our lives. One day, “We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is” (1 John 3:22).

Mentoring involves cheering, celebrating and helping mentees discover their spirit. With a present spirit available, and little noise from their flesh, mentees discover their story and love Jesus more. Reflecting on His life and power “shoots adrenaline into (our) souls.” How good is that?

SKILLS IN MENTORING

Mentors are encouragers. They believe in their mentees and pour life into them. They keep telling them how well they're doing. One of the ways Rod encouraged me was by praying each day for my wife and I. He would write often to encourage us. "What you are both doing is truly wonderful. We are so proud of you. You two are leading such useful lives. You are indestructible. How much good you both have wrought in our broken world. I thank my God on every remembrance of you."

The greatest gift you gave me was how you encouraged me and believed in me. I hadn't ever experienced anything like this before.

Spend time affirming and celebrating mentees growth; "pumping up their tyres." There are few things as powerful as affirmation. With the guys I mentor here in Japan, we are building a stronger community through using any occasion to celebrate and affirm them.

Larry Crabb writes:

I just hung up from a phone call from my mentor. His final words to me were, 'I'm proud of you Larry, I really am.' I had made known no recent achievement or special virtue. He somehow caught a whiff of Christ in me and let me know he enjoyed the fragrance. The life within me was stirred. I felt safe, seen and touched.²³

I continually affirm and encourage mentees. It helps them believe they're truly making progress.

Thank you so much for the affirmation that you gave. Japanese people don't really have a culture of giving affirmation so it means a lot for me to receive these words.

Affirmation is confirmation. Sometimes we have a sense of who we are but other noises can dominate and prevent us from living out our true-selves. When we are affirmed by others, it confirms what the still small voice inside of us has been trying to say. It's profound having someone you respect affirm you, even excited by how you are growing and what God's doing in your life.

Affirmation can be life-changing. I recall teaching a challenging student. One day he did something well. I wrote a note to his parents affirming their son. Forty years later a friend randomly met his mother. My friend asked if she remembered me. She recalled that not only did they frame the letter I had written but the note changed his attitude to school and himself. A different belief grew. The power of one affirming moment.

A mentee needs to know that whatever they tell you is confidential. This needs to be a value you hold. They, in turn, will feel safe. "You can't trust gossipers with a secret; they'll just go blab it all. Put your confidence instead in a trusted friend, for he will be faithful to keep it in confidence" (Proverbs 11:13 TPT).

Being consistent is critical. If I commit to it, then I do it. I want my yes to mean yes. If I say I will pray for a mentee, then I make sure I do it.

You did what you said you would do. You said yes to mentoring and you found time.

Mentees intuitively know if you respect them. The most effective way I have discovered to build respect is to not be an advice giver.

I just don't need any advice. I want you to be a sounding board; to mentor my story, my wounds, my heart.

I love that you are not trying to fix me up!

A WILLING SPIRIT

I want someone who has gone before me, who can hear my story and will listen to me without any judgement. I want someone who won't let me get away with things.

Listening is the most essential mentoring skill. We all have a deep need to be heard, listened to, seen and understood without judgement. If you take time to listen to people, they tell you things. Listening is a discipline, a skill, an imperative. "Everyone should be slow to speak, quick to listen ..." (James 5:19).

It's profound, even holy, whenever someone chooses to open up to you. A door is opened. They meet themselves. From here, they are ready to explore what is truly going on; all the while our internal supervisor – our spirit – is working away in the background.

I don't need you to help me change from the outside through following a set of rules – I want someone willing to listen to the deepest places in my heart.

With you, I can share my inner world, knowing I won't be judged. I feel you love and even cherish me as I am. This gives me the power to change. You are someone listening, recognising the greater man in me than I can't currently see.

The most treasured and effective resource you have in mentoring is your own story. What I've experienced, I seek to reflect, apply and integrate into my mentoring. It may be right to share parts of it, at an appropriate time. For many of us, our story can feel like it is just a source of pain. We want to help mentees turn it around so it becomes a resource that blesses others.

A mentor shows empathy. They seek to understand by entering into the world of the mentee. It builds a comfortable place for growth to happen.

God is coming into my life through your life. Sometimes I feel like it is not about words you say or things you've done, it is about how you make me feel about me.

I have observed over the years in mentoring that listening and showing empathy are “soft” skills. They help you to come alongside those you are mentoring. Situations can arise that challenge us and we can feel ill-equipped to know what to do. Yet in those moments I often observe my skills “hardening,” I sense, I know what I need to do. It takes mentoring to another level.

QUALITIES HELPFUL IN MENTORING

Pablo Martinez, writing of qualities of therapists, could equally be speaking of mentoring when he says:

What are the best techniques? The most therapeutic tool is not a good technique, but a good relationship. Indeed, the client's relationship to the counsellor contains the most powerful forces in the therapeutic process. Change always occurs in the context of a good interpersonal relationship. The techniques you use are of secondary importance compared to your personality and your capacity to be empathic and establish a warm relationship.²⁴

What makes for good relationships with those you mentor?

It's having disciplines and skills to be *with* them. There is a power in *with-ness*. Love people by coming alongside them, encouraging them, going through their pain with them. We are the body together.

I appreciate you turning up when you say you will. It helps build trust between us.

A WILLING SPIRIT

I like how you remember my children's names and ask about my wife when we meet.

You taught me consistency is a key to building trusting relationships. It allowed me to be more vulnerable to share something I was hiding.

I am thankful that I got to see how you move 'towards others.' I watch you show up as a loving presence in the lives of others—even people I would have labelled 'unlovable'.

Thanks for not taking 'my side' but the Fathers. I needed that. I know it wouldn't have been possible to get to where I am without you.

Mentoring is creating a safe place, a kingdom place where I am not a critic but a learner. In this space there is time to slow down, feel settled and make strong connections. There's an absence of loaded questions, rather questions like, "Tell me more about that."

Mentees know it's OK to answer any way they like. They feel safe to say what they want to say. They can ask hard questions, any questions. There is space held to risk and be vulnerable.

I mentor people from different church traditions. I recall a Catholic brother telling me he likes to just sit in his church and feel the comfort of Mary. While this isn't my tradition, I knew it was hardly the moment to comment on his theology. He later revealed that since I wasn't in that moment distracted by his comment, he felt he could trust me more.

I work hard to respect every mentee's journey. When I sense there are issues or even misunderstandings, I bring them up as quickly as possible. It leads to a greater freedom. Mal would say, "You can't arrive at intimacy without working through conflict." I try to live this truth.

Paul captures the role of the mentor "We're not in charge of how you live out the faith, looking over your shoulders, suspiciously

critical. We're partners, working alongside you, joyfully expectant." (2 Corinthians 1:24 MSG)

COMMITMENT

A profound moment in seeing the impact of commitment from a mentor came in the hardest experience of our lives. Our son, Samuel, died at birth. On hearing the news, Rod, and his wife Janet, got into their car and drove 600 kilometres to be with us. I will never forget their arrival. He ran in weeping. They just wanted to be with us. We wept together. I can't recall feeling more loved.

That moment became a marker in my life. I try to come alongside mentees in the good and challenging times, letting them know they are loved and seen.

Thanks for taking me on, being available. It's challenging to find someone who has time for you. You gave up your time- that's a gift for there's no way of getting it back. You respond to my texts, you're intentional, you pray for me. It makes me feel I am not alone.

I want to value others enough by giving them my time. If they've not been in contact to organise a time, I don't assume they're okay. They may be struggling. Praying for them each day keeps them at the front of my mind. Often the Father speaks, making it clear how I can respond to them.

I commit to do all I can to help mentees discover and listen to their spirit and move beyond the noise of their soul. I want to help pass on tools so they can more effectively access their spirit and build soul muscle.

You encourage my small voice until it booms. I see you as my spirit coach. Whenever our spirits connect it puts fire in my heart. I can't tell you what that means to me.

The gift I give to mentees is I will not give up easily. One sent me a text:

I'm disappointed with myself. The more I think about fixing my problems with porn, the more I give in. It's so painful to own up – damn it, I couldn't tell you the other day. Can I really change? I feel I've made you fed up with me.

I responded with:

I've got your back! I am on the journey with you. Man, I'm not fed up with you – how could I be? You're committed to changing. I've glimpsed some of the pain of your loneliness since your teenage years. You're breaking something that is deep within you. I am committed no matter how long. We're going to beat this demon with the Father's help. We're fighting together.

MENTEES SPEAKING

I've collected a number of descriptions from mentees to build a picture of what a mentor does:

You helped me to become more self-aware. I was able to break through my defences and resistance to face the unresolved within me.

You saw the best in me. You helped me come alive to who I truly am.

You supported me as I fought against the battles within me that at times overwhelmed me.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING

*You helped me see what was phoney about my behaviour.
The way you loved me gave me permission to wrestle and
find my true self. It brought me grace and light.*

*You helped me renounce lies and agreements. I learnt
to tell myself the truth about what was really going on
within me.*

*You assisted me most of all to draw myself away from my
head and connect more with my heart.*

*You were like a general – one who was fighting beside me,
guarding and protecting me. I became your apprentice.*

You held my hand and we walked through the dark together.

*You saw me before I was fully me. You helped me see parts
of me that I previously didn't have access to.*

*I experienced the power of what it was like to be listened
to deeply. I felt that you understood my world.*

You helped me to learn how to better supervise myself.

You would stick up for me when I couldn't do it myself.

You were the first person I shared my deepest wounds with.

You believed in me, you were always for me.

*What the Father is saying to me is important to you.
You've helped me see how to have a conversation with
myself and with God.*

*You would listen to the voice of our Father and lead
from there.*

A WILLING SPIRIT

You've helped me put God at the centre of my life. You modelled Kingdom life.

I felt a true feeling of fatherhood from you. You helped me discover my masculine soul.

Through mentoring, I can now say, I was a boy who crossed into the world of men.

You have been a role model for me. I now keep looking out for other men who can lead me and help me grow.

You didn't give answers to the questions I would bring.

You gave me space to explore my world. You showed mercy towards me. It helped me find freedom.

There's space to explore my world. When I first was vulnerable and told you of my brokenness I was free to discover the things that held me back.

My wife tells me, many times, that when I talk with you I become a nicer, better man!

A goal I have for mentees is they become their biggest possible selves.

You saw who I could be and wanted the best for me. Your encouragement helped me get there.

You came into my life and saw who I could be through the eyes of faith. You didn't have expectations of me. It helped me build a bigger picture of who I was.

You help make me aware of my potential. There are times I don't fully accept the gifts God's given to me. I need to hear this from someone.

Rita Pierson, an American educator said:

Everyone deserves a champion ... someone who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.²⁵

5

ENTERING INTO A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

We don't have to be a world-leading expert to help others ... we just need to be a step or two ahead of them on the path

— Lisa Taylor

Example is not the main thing in influencing others – it is the only thing

— Albert Schweitzer

The mentoring relationship is built on trust created through the sharing of life stories

— Tim Dyer

REFLECTION ON THE HOLY FIRE (I)

Mentorship, as I have found on my journey as a mentee, is simply an example of committed communion between fellow believers, where one follower of Christ, who typically has more experience and is farther along his journey, helps the other (more than anything else) to enter the transformation of holy fire.

This holy fire burns away our false perceptions of ourselves and frees our spirits to come alive and lead us into communion with the Holy Spirit. Mentorship helps us to know our true identity and our voice as it was given to us by our Creator. Mentorship acts as a mirror for us to see the true picture of who we are.

Sometimes we look, and we find things we don't want to see. We resist. We hurt. We are tempted to turn away. But courage demands that we push past the pains that arise. Love requires that we step before the burning bush of God's presence to reach out and touch the reality of his flame. Love and courage both come from our core.

The process of mentorship takes digging, reflecting, trusting, and learning to relate with another person in the context of vulnerability; but if we are willing, these first feeble steps before the burning bush will lead to a freeing of our spirits. The goal of mentorship is not to have every question answered, but is to have holy fire unleashed inside our chests and pumped through our veins.

The task of a mentor is to challenge his mentee to enter into that holy fire for himself, painful as it may be, because he knows that this will lead to transformation.

– JH

A friend writes of his experience trying to find a mentor:

“Got any tips for a young Christian dad starting out?” I asked Fred and Harry, two of our church elders. We were painting and I figured this was a good place to ask such a question.

I was 35, struggling with marriage, being a dad of our second child and pioneering a not-for-profit organisation, fundraising etc. I didn’t come from a Christian family, nor did my wife – so we really had no role models. Harry, 68, put down his paintbrush and looked at Fred, 70. There was a long silence. Finally, Fred piped up, “I think it’s a shame you don’t sing the old hymns like we used to!”

I was gutted – was that it?! These were supposed to be my ‘elders’. My initial hurt turned to anger then over the days – compassion, as I realised it wasn’t that they would not help me – they could not. They had no idea how to share personally or vulnerably. Inwardly, I made an agreement not to ask again. That nagging ‘you’re all alone’ feeling lingered. Not a helpful agreement.

I stepped out again in my early 40s, being urged in a global leadership position that I should have a ‘mentor.’ My friend Gary was 15 years my senior whom I respected. However, I found I had to constantly pursue him, and he found our meetings as much a space to share how he was feeling about life and throw a few bits of advice my way. That lasted barely two years.

I stopped looking for the next decade. In my late 50’s I was increasingly mentoring younger men. A men’s ministry helped me with some male navigation and I found two older men to prepare me for the next stage of life – the age of the sage. These are far too rare. I meet with Cal (73) on the phone monthly (he’s in another country) and Chris quarterly for a coffee and chat. We have discussed marriage to a menopausal woman, the impact of physical health, the coming death of friends, and the need for reflection. I wish I’d had

this input earlier, but it just didn't seem to be there and as I was in leadership, I felt overlooked and forgotten.

FURTHER AHEAD

It is too easy to be busy with full calendars. We don't find many people willing or comfortable to go deep and have life-giving conversations.

Perhaps you are feeling that you don't have the skills to mentor. You may believe that having unresolved issues within you could work against you helping anyone. Perhaps you just lack confidence. As an Aussie mate of mine says, "Don't let your own crap disqualify you from helping others."

How about thinking of mentoring as *alongsiding*? Could your role simply be one of interest in how they are going, creating a supportive, *befriending* relationship? One that encourages them when you can.

Mentoring is being a little ahead of them, not trying to solve their problem. Rather giving them space, asking plenty of questions and being a mirror to them. C.S. Lewis captures it when he writes, "Think of me as a fellow patient in the same hospital, having been admitted a little earlier."²⁶ Paul writes, "Your faith will help me, and my faith will help you" (Romans 1:12 NCV).

THREE TYPES OF MENTORING

1. *Formal Mentoring Relationship*

This is an agreement where a mentee commits to be part of a mentoring relationship. This is largely the model explored in this book. It may take place weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or bi-monthly. It can be over the internet, though the preference would always be face to face.

2. *Informal Mentoring*

This is more spontaneous, unexpected. It's not formalised but there is something beautifully intentional to it without it coming across like that. Most of us are informally mentoring others around us right now, without even knowing it. People are looking at the way we live.

I met Ken who told me about an informal mentoring relationship he was part of. At 15 he longed for someone to help him make sense of his world. At church he met John, 7 years older. Ken recounted:

John shared his world with me, talked at my level, he was enthusiastic and befriended me. He was himself – authentic, and contagious. I was affected by him. He made himself emotionally available largely by talking honestly about his struggles with issues of lust and ladies. I needed someone to talk to me like that. I asked questions and his answers were always direct and honest. He didn't tell me stories to impress me; he was just real.

He was willing to take risks. He knew who he was in God. We had some fun times together. He was radical. He challenged me to not believe masculinity was about appearances. I see now I was looking for a strong masculine role model. He was that to me. He knew the value of young guys having other men around them.

He became my friend. He would take me places. He was the first man I saw as a man of God. He loved God more than I'd seen in others. He showed me what male friendships could be. He modelled what a man is like.

He was an older guy who had gone before me. It wasn't an official mentoring relationship, we were friends. When

he got married, he asked me to be one of his groomsmen. I reciprocated years later at my wedding and invited him to stand next to me.

3. *Peer Mentoring*

All those I mentor, I strongly encourage to have at least one peer mentor – someone closer to their age who they can *do life* with. It's a relationship where there's space to be honest and accountable.

John Mallison describes peer mentoring:

This involves co-mentoring with a person of similar age, interests and commitment to Christ. The first two types of mentoring focus mainly on receiving or giving; this, however, is a shared relationship, involving both giving and receiving, an equal relationship between two people who value and respect each other, and believe each can enrich the other.²⁷

Solomon describes what peer mentoring can be like:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help ... two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10,12)

Rick Warren uses the term, "Battle Buddies." I've heard them described as "Covenant Comrades." Someone fighting alongside you, who you can be accountable to with your thoughts, compulsions, and insecurities. Peer mentors support each other as they do battle against "the world, the flesh and the devil" – what the *Anglican Prayer Book* refers to as the "Evil Trinity."

A mentee described his running mate:

He reciprocates at every level – checks up on me. He is interested in how I am going. We know we are in this together. We are both hungry to be better friends and husbands and leaders. He knows everything that I am managing.

I encourage each man I mentor to think of mentoring in this way; as they walk the path there is someone ahead of them, someone alongside them, and someone behind them. The person ahead is their mentor—helping them prepare for the next life stage or skill level. Some mentees have more than one mentor to get as much support and encouragement as they can. Alongside them is their *running mate* – a peer mentor beside them, walking in a similar place in life. Behind them is someone they mentor – I encourage all those I mentor to invest in a mentee. Not everyone may be ready, but encouraging them sensitises mentees to possibilities in the future.

I want to help others the way I have been helped by you.

A Biblical image is of having a Paul ahead of you, a Barnabas beside you, and a Timothy behind you.

HOW DO I FIND A MENTOR?

It's helpful to begin by identifying the age bracket that you are looking for. Try not to be too prescriptive. I am in my mid-sixties and I mentor a thirty-year-old guy who tells me that I am younger than he is. He wrote a Haiku;

*Wreathed in Christmas lights
Marty is the evergreen
Younger than his sons.*

Generally, it's helpful to find someone in a more *advanced* season in life.

Searching for a mentor – I knew I was looking, above all, for a role model. I looked around my church trying to find a man with a dynamic faith. I knew of a man who stood out. Watching him live out his faith made a big impact on me. I wanted what he had. His life was the example I aspired to. I asked him and he said he was up for it.

In searching for a mentor, John Mallison encourages people to “Keep their antennae up and find or create opportunities to watch and listen to potential candidates, weighing them against what you are really after.”²⁸

Make a shortlist of those you could possibly ask, then pray. When you sense you have the right person, come alongside them in a comfortable way – a coffee, a meal together or maybe just an email or text – inviting them to mentor you.

Discovering a mentor is largely intuitive and God-led. You are looking to identify the person who you think can hold space for you. You’re looking for a spirit-to-spirit connection, someone you sense will listen, be open, and who you can trust. Don’t decide for them by assuming they’re too busy to mentor you. A mentor, when asked, often considers it a great privilege, and an honour to be invited to play a mentoring role.

I recall once being asked to mentor:

The reason I’m asking you is I sense you’re not struggling with some of the issues that I am; plus I know you have someone mentoring you. I talked with other guys to see if they could help me be accountable but they didn’t take me on because I sensed they were struggling with similar issues.

Why do people feel it is okay to open up to someone? It’s all at a process level. Somehow you just *know* it is okay to be transparent with them. You sense their interest in you based on the questions

they've asked or even the way they look at you. A confidence builds that you can trust them. They won't judge you or try to fix you up.

As a mentor I have never asked anyone if I could mentor them. It is always their responsibility, a deliberate decision they make.

A friend described to me how he found his mentor:

I was after someone I could be transparent with. I wondered if there was anyone who could help me. I looked around for someone with an open mind who wouldn't judge me. I thought of one guy – who I admired for his life experience. I felt I could trust him and I thought I would enjoy being with him. His life inspired me as someone who trusts God. It would cost me to ask him. He was a long drive away. I asked him. I am glad I did. It's been totally worth it.

Another told me his story:

When I met my mentor in my late teens, I was in a stagnant place in my life. I knew there was much to learn. I saw in their life someone who had stepped over a line. Call it intuition, wisdom, or desperation – I just knew I was a boy who saw a man who could show me the way to get there. It was that simple. So, in an act of courage, I asked him the most important question I have asked in my young adulthood; 'Would you mentor me?' Everything changed from the moment he agreed. I'd done something – something I wouldn't realise the effects of until years later. I had asked someone more capable and wiser than me for help and they said yes.

Sometimes mentoring opportunities happen randomly. Keikei, in Japan, grew up as a devout Buddhist. He was leading a youth group at the Buddhist temple. The group decided to go to a church in Tokyo to see how they ran youth groups. God had been

revealing Himself to Keikei and he was convicted by the preaching. As an invitation for commitment was given, he put his hand up. He began attending our church.

One evening, along with some others, I spoke to him about our spirit. He heard his spirit and immediately asked if I'd mentor him. He's a surfer, so we went to his territory. We sat by the beach as he faced issues from his past. A typhoon was on its way. He said to me, *I want to be free, let's run into the ocean.* Once in, we prayed, and then under he went, his past being cleaned out; the boy being left behind. It was a defining moment he frequently speaks about. He hasn't looked back. He's in a full-time surfing ministry and now mentoring others. At his engagement party he told everyone that this night, more than anything else, prepared him to be married.

A Brazilian friend told me how God brought seven ladies into her life for her to mentor. Many had been praying for years that God would give them a woman of faith who would help them grow:

I spent time individually with each of them, praying for them often and asking questions to help them find their identity and their role in the Kingdom.

I let the Holy Spirit speak to them. We'd read books together, share struggles, fears, failures and mistakes. They became part of my life. They learnt that God would provide – that He was real.

We began doing ministry together. They'd come training with me. I took two girls on a mission trip to Ukraine. They told me they didn't have the money. I challenged them to pray. God provided. It was life-changing.

We spent four years together and finished with a graduation ceremony. One commented, 'This is the best thing I have ever done in my life.'

When I had a commissioning service (when moving to Japan) every one of the ladies turned up – some with their husbands. I felt overwhelmed with love; a sense of mission accomplished.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FIRST MEET?

I always plan to have an initial meeting to talk about our expectations in mentoring. Basically, it's an opportunity to "look each other over." Are we comfortable together? What is the connection like?

I find one of the best initial questions I ask is similar to Jesus' question to Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51). Or sometimes it is as simple as, "How can I help you?" Mallison encourages mentors in this first meeting together:

... to be honest about our gut feelings in the light of this brief encounter – to seek to assess whether we are meant to continue. If I don't feel the person is serious enough about the commitment involved, I suggest they think further about it and contact me later if they wish.²⁹

Basically, this first meeting gives us a chance to get to know each other. Mallison uses these questions:

- ✦ Tell me about yourself. (General background. What motivates you?)
- ✦ What are your strengths? (Both your gifts and your growing edges.)
- ✦ Tell me about your best friend.
- ✦ Tell me about your spouse and family.
- ✦ Tell me about your relationship to God. (How it really is, not how it ought to be.)

- Tell me about your ministry. (What is your vision? What enthuses you? Where are the challenges? How are you feeling about your ministry?)³⁰

The Arrow Leadership Program suggests other questions for that first meeting:

- What are some key turning points in your life so far?
- What are the top three challenges you are facing at the moment?
- How are things with you and God?
- What are your *big rocks* or priorities for this next season?³¹

As I ask questions, I watch myself enjoying hearing their story, and understanding their journey. Often, at our first meeting I ask them to tell me their story – and off they go!

A friend, Tim Dyer, who lectures in mentoring, expresses it this way:

The mentee's story provides for deeper understanding of the individual to be mentored. It gives an indication of the key issues in their life. The level of vulnerability gives an indication of the desire of the mentee for growth, accountability and development. The mentor's story creates the credibility to invest in the life of the mentee.³²

As I hear their responses to the questions and listen to their unfolding story, I often observe how quickly it's possible to sense the connection taking place between us.

What I look for is how willing are they to share of themselves. I can sense if they are really committed to growing.

If we decide to move forward, then we talk about how often we will meet. Some are extra keen and even ask if I could meet with them weekly. That's a big ask, but sometimes it's been right to do that. Most often, it is once a month or every six weeks to two months. It depends on your availability, and theirs. Most of my mentoring times go for 60 to 90 minutes. You will find your rhythm.

SETTING GOALS

In order for there to be clear expectations, I find it helpful early on to invite them to clarify their goals in mentoring. Sometimes, they're very clear and specific. One guy, preparing for his marriage, found it helpful to set goals for his body, soul, and spirit. He was super motivated as the wedding approached. He would say to me, *We've got a race to godly-husband-readiness to win*. He fought doggedly for his goals.

In our mentoring, I knew the goals I set were worth fighting for. I did the work. My heart and mind changed. I am ready to dive into my next adventure.

Others prefer more general goals that become a reference point at mentoring times. I have found it helpful to make the goals clear – but not have too high an expectation of when it will all happen.

When mentees are frustrated that they are not growing enough, I remind myself of these words from Snyder:

A danger in mentoring is that we can be expecting too much – hoping for an outcome. Mentoring is a process. It requires submitting to a process that is inconvenient and a timeline that you don't want ...³³

Some come very specifically to be mentored because their flesh is taking them over. With many men, it's a struggle with porn. Rather than setting a goal that feels beyond them we work through the issues behind their addiction. We celebrate every win they have.

I am more interested (so is God) in how they get up after a fall and deal with shame and guilt.

A wide range of issues often arise as you mentor. It helps them to choose goals they can achieve. Each win helps them grow in courage and strength to take up the next challenge.

CONCLUDING A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

It is helpful to have a suggested time frame around your mentoring. It may be that they want to continue after the agreed-upon time. Checking with them if they would like to continue is important as it gives them space to decide if this mentoring relationship is helping them grow.

If mentoring is not happening as you would like, don't be passive, rather acknowledge what is going on. Some may prefer a different approach than what you bring. Find a way forward to care for yourself and your mentor. As Mallison says:

Some mentoring continues over an extended period; but most mentoring has a cut-off point where both agree the purpose for meeting has been fulfilled. Strong bonds can be developed and there may be difficulty for either or both to let go. There needs to be an acceptance that endings are a natural part of any relationship. Once it has been agreed that it's time to let go, it is important not to deny or delay the process.³⁴

As a mentoring relationship comes to a natural close, I like to review what their experience has been. I generally ask these questions:

- ✦ What's been helpful about our mentoring time together?
- ✦ What was not so helpful?

- ✦ Where have you grown and where do you see there are places you'd still like to grow?
- ✦ What may be the next steps in your mentoring journey?

It's helpful to mark the moment with a celebration reflecting on their growth. Sometimes it may be a meal together, or perhaps a symbolic gift.

Appendices 2 and 3 contain summaries of much of what is covered in this Chapter and the following 3 Chapters.

MENTORING IN ACTION

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel

— Maya Angelou

Accepting constructive criticism opens your heart to the path of life, making you right at home among the wise

— Proverbs 15:31 TPT

You can only take people on the journey you have been willing to embrace

— Richard Rohr

REFLECTION ON THE HOLY FIRE (2)

Becoming a man is not achieved through inheriting a list of rules and guidelines, but through entering into holy fire and then carrying it with us into the darkness of mystery.

It happens when you come face to face with the burning bush on Mount Sinai and recognise the presence of the holy God, and stick your hand in the fire, and realise that you haven't been burned.

As men, we are largely afraid to enter into that fire; God's holy flame, because we are afraid that we will be burned. And the truth is that parts of us will likely catch fire. There is much in me that needs to be refined by fire and turned to ash. This can be painful. But it is important to remember that the fire will burn away what doesn't need to be there. What remains is our true substance, the fabric of our being, made from that same everlasting flame and, instead of pain, when we discover our core, we will find belonging and a welcome home.

So, we must enter the flame if we are to know our true selves. If we are to encounter the men that we truly are, beneath all of the kindling that is waiting to be burned. We encounter our identity in the fire because we encounter the living God there. He is the one who holds our identities and shakes us from our slumber.

– JH

A mentee reflects on the power of feedback:

In the Summer of 2004, the Athens Olympics, I was a leader of a youth camp in Greece where I live. A few months previously I had become a believer. An American friend asked me to share my testimony to a group of 80 volunteers from the United States.

It was my first time sharing my testimony. Marty had become my mentor. I asked him to be there if he wanted. He came to support me – even sitting in the front row.

When I finished, most people came to hug me. Many were crying, moved by my story.

When we were both alone, he came to me and with a smile, gently said, “Nice story mate.” He affirmed what I had done. Then he asked if I wanted some feedback? I was open. He gently said, “Maybe next time you might want to let them know a little more of what God did in your life rather than just sharing what your life was like before you met Jesus.”

The moment he said it I knew in my heart that my story was more about me. I was speaking for an hour of how bad I was, evil ruling my life – perhaps I spent 10 minutes on how God changed me.

I will not forget that moment.

Years on, when someone asks me about my story, I spend 2-3 minutes speaking about the time in my life without God, maybe 10 minutes on how he changed me that day and the rest of the time I share how He is changing me every day making me new.

The way Marty spoke to me was important. He spoke the truth in a way that I could hear. He wasn't afraid to take me on. I was learning from him how to share God in my life. This is something I now do full time in Greece.

GIVING FEEDBACK

Truth, while it may be hard, is ultimately liberating. How can we help mentees to grow- to see the truth that will set them free?

We all have blind spots, and to see them, we each need others to be a mirror for us. We can't do this for ourselves.

You helped me see what I just couldn't see.

I'm committed to feedback. Done well, it turbo-charges growth. Why waste a chance to grow?

I've observed people giving feedback with little or no grace. It doesn't work. I'd even say it is virtually impossible for others to receive it. I need to check when giving any feedback that it's not coming from my frustration.

So, I do the soul work to prepare myself to give feedback. Otherwise what I say may be contaminated and won't really help the recipient. I need to ask myself, am I simply *dumping* on them or am I coming from a loving desire to help them grow? Paul writes, "Speaking the truth in love ..." (Ephesians 4:15). In feedback we do our best to speak the truth. It's the two words, *in love* that make all the difference.

Have you ever experienced people speaking *truth* to you, but it wasn't coming from love? Possibly there was frustration, or even anger, within them.

I discipline myself to only give feedback after I have prayed and worked out what I really need to say. I know if I'm irritated or annoyed, they won't be able to hear anything. Passing on effective feedback requires us to do the work.

We judge ourselves by our motives and others by their actions. To ask yourself what may have been going on for them helps you try to understand their behaviour. That way, there's more grace around.

I ask myself these questions:

- ✦ Where are they and how can they best hear this?
- ✦ How can I craft the words I want to say to make sure they will know what I am saying?
- ✦ How can I ensure it is specific and speaks to the data – that it's focused on something they can change?

It's best to make your feedback descriptive, not evaluative. In other words, describe their behaviour, but don't even make guesses of what their experience was.

Here is the model of what to say that I find most helpful. "When you (describe what they did), I felt (share how your own feeling world responded – your feelings are valid)."

For example, "When you acted this way in the group, I felt sad and discounted."

This is your genuine, feeling-based response. It's hard to disagree with. It's your feeling world. It takes away from judging them for you are not evaluating their behaviour.

Feedback needs to be properly timed. Give it as soon as possible after it happens. It is also most likely to be heard when it has been asked for.

Feedback is most effective in a safe and accepting climate. In that context you can check to ensure that the communication was clear and they truly heard what you were saying.

I recall speaking about feedback at a church conference. Someone (honestly) told me this was asking too much. Ultimately, they preferred to avoid conflict. Not surprisingly, there wasn't a strong sense of community amongst them.

Building authentic community involves working through conflict. There is no other way.

Are we willing to commit to this level of community in our mentoring relationships?

A WILLING SPIRIT

Giving and receiving feedback has made our group a safer place. The true beauty of our community is seen as we gently but intentionally give feedback on each other's blind spots. Through this process we help each other enter into a safe place to see our deficits and bruises for ourselves. It's where healing has taken place.

I recall giving feedback to a mentee. I was impressed with the way he heard it. The next day he asked if he could see me. He thanked me for the feedback. He hadn't realised how he came across to others. He felt the freest he had ever experienced. From that point on he would eagerly say, *Come on, give me more feedback!*

While everyone may not be this enthusiastic, your response to feedback is a sign of your willingness to grow. Generally, I look forward to giving feedback because I know it will lead to growth.

I actually gave you, Marty, some feedback and you didn't react or withdraw like I have often done. Surprisingly you thanked me. You have a lot of space around you.

When I receive feedback, I thank people. Often very enthusiastically. They're giving me a gift. It's a reflection of the strength of our growing relationship.

It may not be easy to hear feedback. Yet as the writer of Proverbs says, "When you humbly receive wise correction, it adorns your life with beauty and makes you a better person" (Proverbs 25:12 TPT). Friends, willing enough to challenge us, are invaluable.

Don't let what you are reading now be theory. Is there someone who could grow because you're willing to give them feedback? Prepare your heart, do the work, reflect on these guidelines, pray and have a go! It could well change their life ... and yours.

Here's another challenge. Ask a close friend for feedback about how you come across. As I've written earlier, feedback is best given when asked for. Invite them to feed back to you any blind spots

they see in your life. Speaking the truth, always in love. It's the best way to grow.

LOVE AT THE CENTRE

Jerome Frank, a leading figure in the field of therapy research, says:

Any success in therapy depends on the therapist's ability to care for the patient, to be competent to help and having no ulterior motive ...³⁵

Psychotherapists should focus on one simple yet profound idea- that the essence of all successful psychotherapy is love.³⁶

It's as true in therapy as it is in mentoring. The freer I am, the more I can see, help, and love mentees. Love is the qualification. It's profound for mentees to know and feel loved by their mentor.

Mentoring is a friendship with love at the centre.

You took so much time with me. We moved on the level of the heart and the spirit. I met an older person from the other side of the globe who spoke to me with the language of love. By being my friend, you helped me discover the real me.

I not only saw you loved me, I felt it. It made it easier to share my life with you.

I want those I mentor to win – I believe in them and love them. When they share struggles, slips, mistakes, I try to meet them with unconditional love.

I loaned our car to a mentee and he lost the key. It was a challenging time for him. After the key was found, he told me what spoke to him most, was that I was more interested in how he was going, rather than whether he found the key.

I am mentoring a young man addicted to porn. Whenever we catch up I keep telling him, “I’m going to love you no matter what. I am for you, I’m in your corner.” He keeps letting me know how thankful he is that I am not giving up on him.

I appreciate what Peter writes about love, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). I refer to this verse often. I may make mistakes but I hope that mentees know I love them.

I felt this pure love that you had for me. There was no judgement that would make me defensive. God has been coming into my life though your life.

I never really thought of you as a mentor. I thought of you as my friend. What stood out to me most was no matter how busy you were, you made time to connect with me. You were always interested in how I was going, excited to see me and hear what God was doing in my life.

IDENTIFICATION

I observe mentees watching me. It’s often why they invite me to mentor them. They’ve seen something they like. One mentee expressed it uniquely:

I’m vampiring from you Marty. I’m absorbing everything.

My goal and hope is they’re admiring the Jesus they see in me:

When I think of Jesus I have a pop up of you in my mind and that sets an example of a man I want to become. You exemplify who I want to be.

I saw something different in you. I wanted to be like you – that is why I asked you to help train me.

We all need people around us who both inspire and give us a pattern to learn and grow from.

I see the drills you do each day to be with God. I know you are praying for me. I watch how you are there for others.

When a mentee says, “I follow God and you, Marty,” a part of me wants to say, “No, not me, look to God.” Yet, I recall how strongly I identified with my mentors and watched as they followed God.

I want to be like you when I am old.

I am learning to not fear when mentees desire to emulate and identify with me. I often say that what they see and like in me is what is latent within them. I want to call it out and help nurture it.

Mal describes it like this:

When we are spiritually sensitive and alive we look around for somebody more spiritually integrated to identify with: in doing so we enable our spirit...to become integrated into our sense of self. When our spirit or the highest self in us is inspired, it typically yearns to become completed and fulfilled by transcending its old sense of self.³⁷

Paul explicitly shows how it works, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul had a realistic and humble picture of himself. He knew the importance of modelling and emulation.

I am challenged to live up to the high view mentees have of me. It calls me out. I want to be a strong model for them as they see me as a husband and as a man of God.

When you spoke one day, you were shining. I strongly felt I wanted to be like you. I was clear about one thing: I

wanted to follow what you were doing. I watched you truly enjoy fellowshiping with God.

I was drawn to the way you carry yourself, not only the message you shared as I heard you speak, but you spoke with authority, with kindness, and freedom. I imagine this is how people encountered Jesus in his earthly ministry.

We want mentees to become more like Jesus. We may be the first step along the way, we're definitely not the end goal. How can they, by following our example, live and be more like Jesus?

In all healthy mentoring relationships, there is a separateness. Mentees are free to take their journey. It's like a young eagle's parents forcing the fledgling bird out of the nest. They have no other choice but to fly. In the same way we set the mentee free, trusting them to God.

Mal would often remind me that leadership is helping people take effective action. I want to help them to be separate, inter-dependent and completing their story. If you're separate and know who you are, you avoid any co-dependency developing in mentoring.

BOUNDARIES

Healthy mentoring relationships establish appropriate boundaries.

Not many people I know are mentored by the opposite sex. I understand why. On my masculine journey, I've experienced some of what the guys I mentor may currently be going through. I don't have to tell them about it. Intuitively they know I've lived it, reflected on it and somehow I understand.

Sharing at the level that helps mentees grow is generally easier with someone of the same sex. In one survey from an American university there was an overwhelming preference for mentees to have a mentor of the same sex.³⁸

I am conscious of the importance of appropriate physical boundaries. I may ask as we finish up, "Is it okay to give you a

hug?” I have found mentees feel respected and more able to trust when I check with them. My goal is to genuinely give space so they can say no and feel comfortable enough to say it.

Mallison writes:

It's wise to remember that the purpose of touch is to provide another dimension of support for the person being cared for. It is not to meet the needs of the carer ... Whether a touch is 'good', 'bad' or 'confusing' is determined by how the receiver experiences it – not by the intentions of the person doing the touching.³⁹

In mentoring I am observing, scanning, and taking in their behaviour, reading the process. This helps me know what is the best way to respond. Sometimes I miss reading what is going on. So we try to work it out together. I want to come with a learning posture to every mentoring time.

What do you do when mentees ask to connect with you outside of your times together? I find it doesn't happen often as mentees appreciate the time I make for them and respect my other commitments. Mentoring is hardly my full time job. However, if they make contact, I realise it is probably significant. I get as much information that I can of what is going on. Generally, my spirit knows, if I listen to it then I will know what to do.

Generally, where possible, I seek to be available. I've often found significant growth takes place when mentees contact me when they feel a strong need, even in an emergency. They're grateful I am willing to find a way to help them.

MENTORING AND THERAPY

There are times when I can't help my mentees with some of the profound issues they're working through. I am simply not trained or equipped to help them. I let them know that.

Mallison comments:

As a mentor we have limits to our knowledge and understanding, experience, skills, and resources ... We never lose face when we admit our limitations, indeed it serves to build confidence. This is the time to act as a bridge to those with more than we ourselves have to offer in certain areas. If you suspect outside help is needed, gently raise the issue. Ask if they think it would be beneficial. Most will be relieved that help is available.⁴⁰

I have suggestions of people that may be able to help them. I am always clear that I will never “make” someone see a therapist.

I encouraged a mentee for a while to seek help. It took him a few years. Finally, he decided to go. He shared with the therapist his struggle. The mentee told me his therapist was direct, “If you don’t seek professional help, you will carry this issue throughout your life. I believe I can help you find the little boy inside of you and try to interpret what he is holding onto. It’s a real challenge for you to find your little boy by yourself. I sense he is scared and hiding.”

The mentee asked him, *What happens if we find the hidden little boy and he speaks up?*

The therapist responded, “Well, your chronic anger and your giving in to the flesh should disappear. You won’t feel the same way again.” The mentee told me, *It was hard, even shocking for me to face this. Marty, I’m going to do it. Pray for me. Thanks for showing your love to me by not giving up with my battles over the years.*

When I got his text I could only respond and tell him how proud I was of him, for his courage to take the hardest way. I felt that he had taken “the road less travelled”, a paraphrase of a line from Robert Frost’s 1915 poem “The Road Not Taken.”

Others are hungry, enthusiastic to visit a therapist. One mentee sees a therapist weekly. He described to me the role his therapist plays alongside what I do as his mentor.

With you Marty, I do the initial digging. With my therapist I go deep, look around to what is happening to me and within me. I then collect the nuggets and bring them to the surface. I unpack them with you. It's like we are treasure hunting together.

Therapy helps because you can explore the experience in a safe place until you get the capacity to explore with your own spirit – your internal supervisor.

PATIENCE IN MENTORING

One mentee left half-way through a discipleship program we were running. In talking about it with Mal, he reminded me of the last line of the nursery rhyme, Little Bo Peep, “Leave them alone and they’ll come home, wagging their tails behind them.” We decided to wait. He more than *came home*. After a few months he sought me out to apologise. Now he regularly thanks me for how I loved him and gave him space to learn from what happened. He tells me it was a significant learning time in his life.

There are no guarantees they will come through their faith wrestling. One guy I mentored for two years decided to give up on God. I knew God hadn’t given up on him, so I decided I wouldn’t either. I keep reaching out to him and on occasions we have meals together. I am not pursuing him actively but we keep in touch. If I am waiting for him I know how much more the Father wants to welcome him home.

At one level, it’s easy to lose motivation if mentees don’t take the relationship seriously, when they don’t seem to want to grow. I want to try to understand why this is happening. What do you do when mentees stop connecting with you?

Sometimes I let it go and wait. There are times I make contact to inquire what the silence means. I want to understand what is

happening in their world. I am not pushy. Sometimes they choose not to respond. One mentee told me:

Every single time there's silence from me it means I am struggling. I'm ashamed of how I have given in to my flesh and I feel burdened by my own sin and unable to hope. Please take me on – don't be put off by my defences and passivity. Thanks for reaching out. I want to talk.

Another mentee shared:

I know I have been avoiding you. I find it hard to face some of my issues. I am thankful you have kept gently letting me know in small ways that you are around. When I reached out to you the other day and you found time to talk to me I was thankful. I am ready to face myself and grow. Thanks for not giving up.

FREEDOM FIGHTING

The freer I am, the more I can help others thrive. “Spiritual people touch others because they are free.”⁴¹ Three simple yet powerful sentences (author unknown) express the power and authority we can have:

Free people, free people.

Hurt people, hurt people.

Free people, free hurt people.

You believed in me more than I did. You stayed with me and wouldn't give up. It's why you free others.

Your life has freed me. You have received the love of God and you're passing it on to others.

MOMENTUM & GROWING IN AWARENESS

*The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others*

— 2 Timothy 2:2

*It is not what you accomplish that matters most. It is what you set
into motion*

— Unknown

*They triumphed over him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by
the word of their testimony*

— Revelation 12:11

REFLECTIONS ON THE MENTORING JOURNEY

Life is a journey, full of exploration and discovery. Sometimes we explore pain, doubt, hatred, hurt, and confusion. Other times we discover grace, love, healing, courage, and strength. The adventure of living is riddled with beauty, pain, order, chaos, relationship, creation, destruction, and, perhaps above all, mystery.

It's easy to lose our way. To journey well requires us to go deeper than the shallow tides of our time; to find deeper wells of delight and hidden currents of good movement. Many of us are fixated on the task of arriving at the end of our journey, but have never taken the time to really know where it is that we want to end up, and thus don't know where it is we are heading. We become more interested in arriving anywhere, rather than somewhere, because anywhere feels better than nowhere.

We have received lots of input, both good and bad, from others along the way, but unless we learn to know ourselves and recognise who it is we are following, then we will often find ourselves lost along the way.

Still others have willed to go it alone and find their own way forward. We think we see clearly by ourselves, but end up traveling dangerously with hidden blind-spots and painful deficits. These deficits tend to fester as they go untreated and our blind-spots remain unnoticed to us in the dark.

— JH

Moving overseas meant I didn't see much of Mal, my former mentor. I knew he prayed for me every day. I watched him and learnt from him for many years. I caught his spirit.

I wanted to introduce Mal to two of the men I mentor, Daniel from the United States and Strahinja from Serbia – an opportunity for three 'generations' to gather over Zoom. Sharing his insights transported me back to mentoring times in his office and then long calls when we moved overseas.

Both guys were moved by his wisdom and his ability to listen and understand them. They would say, *Crazy, what?* and *I'm insanely thankful*. As we were finishing up, I said, "Mal, you helped me discover, free, and then strengthen my spirit. You brought insight and a love for the Word of God. You helped me see the things that got in the way of my freedom. You didn't doubt who I could be."

I reminded Mal how he'd look directly into my eyes and say, "Marty, I love you." At first I would shield my eyes. He'd come back again, "Marty, can you hear that? I love you." I let this truth seep in. I thanked him for how he reached out to me to love me and for trusting me when I couldn't trust myself. It helped me to feel *at home* with God and with myself.

I said to Mal, "Your mentoring transformed me. I discovered my story. I'm now mentoring these two, doing what you did for me. There are days when a word or phrase comes out and I smile and say to myself, "That was Mal.""

Mal responded, "Marty, that is the wonderful thing about identification – the insight gained by another. Well, it's possible to integrate so it becomes an authentic part of you. Me? I am getting older. I don't know how long I will be around for. It is just lovely to see the flame continue. Everyone who has been given the gift of freedom has the responsibility to help others find it."

Strahinja spoke up, *I am looking at the screen and I see two sages talking to two young students. It is the privilege of my life to be part of something like this. It is changing the world. I am grateful that both*

of you would take on a young student like me. Mal, thanks for being there for Marty. He's now there for us because you were there for him. You're our grandfather!

A quietness descended. A moment to savour. I felt tears pricking my eyes. I offered to pray. It came straight from my spirit. "Father, you have been such a part of today, nudging us, sitting with us in the Word and the silences. Thanks that we can celebrate Mal. Thanks for his investment in me. He helped me discover my way to mentor, to know my spirit. It's set me up to help these two guys find their story – their way into their narrative. Thanks for how they're both investing in others."

We finished, and said farewell to each other. I sat there trying to take in what I had experienced. It wasn't long before Strahinja texted. *What just happened?* he wrote, *I was crying out of joy and thankfulness during that prayer.*

All I could tell him was that it was the Kingdom.

IMPACT OF MENTORING

It's a privilege watching mentees grow each in their own way. Often their courage and determination inspires and challenges me. Seeds I have been part of sowing are bearing much fruit. Through mentoring I am investing into their lives, setting up a solid foundation from which they can build.

Mentees share what they are learning with families and friends. One mentee told me, *What I have learnt has transformed my life. I shared breaking agreements with my mum and every day, she now tells me, she is finding and breaking agreements.*

I feel similar to C.S. Lewis, who, in writing about his role in someone coming to faith, says:

The fact I have been allowed to play a part is always mixed with awe and even fear such as a boy might feel on first being allowed to fire a rifle. The disproportion

between his puny finger on the trigger and the thunder and lightning which follows is alarming. And the seriousness of which the other party takes my words always raises doubt whether I have taken them seriously enough myself.⁴²

The greatest joy in mentoring, for me, is witnessing those I've been helping and mentoring speaking into others' lives. I have supported them to find their story, now they are helping others experience similar freedoms.

When someone told me that the responsibility of being free is to free others, I found it both challenging and empowering. Freedom comes with a responsibility. Jesus said, "Great gifts mean great responsibilities; greater gifts, greater responsibilities!" (Luke 12:48 MSG)

I challenge all my mentees that our growing freedom calls us out to responsibility.

One mentee wrote:

Marty is now 66 years old. He has been spending time with people in this community, revealing who Jesus is, training us to grow like Jesus. It's been a transformational experience in my Christian life. This desire to make disciples of Christ like Marty does, has grown strong in me. I am now doing it. The Heavenly Father's joy rises within me when I see them growing steadily as we meet each week.

Other mentees have connected with me to share what they are doing:

I would not be doing this if you hadn't sown so much into me. God blesses me because of you not giving up on me. All the guys I am now mentoring are all part of your family. It's Kingdom logic. Jesus multiplies.

I've been doing mentoring for several years now. I get very positive feedback. I find myself often saying sentences (in German though!) that I've copied from you, because they're full of wisdom. I wanted to give it back to you and say thanks for investing in me. It helped me a lot to be the man I am today.

I was thankful that you took that much time with me. You invested in me. Now I am doing it for others.

This book is not theory. I am passing on what I've learnt to encourage a mentoring movement. Our generation needs mentors – we've lost our way. We need help to be found and known, to become more confident in who we are.

The baton is being passed on. We have momentum. Nicky Gumbel has this prayer:

Lord, help me to pass on the baton to the next generation – to pray for them, love them, believe in them, minister to them, challenge them, encourage them, entrust them, share with them, and to stand with them. Help focus their journey, uncover the broken, captive places within, and help bring them home to their truest story. Amen⁴³

INDIVIDUATION

I speak often to mentees about the process of individuation. To find our true self, we need to discover the *me* from the *not me*. It requires us to be strong enough to say *No* to people, (for the right reasons) even when we know they may be disappointed.

For the first twelve years of our life, our relationships, particularly with our parents, are based around dependency. Our view of reality is shaped by those closest to us. Around the time of adolescence, we move to counter-dependency, in various degrees,

where our view of reality is often the opposite of our parents or parental figures.

Moving on from counter-dependency, we arrive at independence which, at its extreme, is us saying, "I have my view of reality and nothing else matters." It's possible to feel we've arrived when we're independent. However, we remain isolated if we believe the process stops here.

In interdependent relationships I can acknowledge the limitations of my view of reality. As I open myself to the perspectives of others, I can choose to take into account their views as I make my choices. I want to challenge mentees to have an answer to the question of, "Who am I?"

Remarkably, Jesus had a strong sense of who He was even as a twelve-year-old at the temple at Jerusalem. When reunited with his parents he asked them, 'Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' (Luke 2:49). How amazing, at the age of twelve, He knew who He was.

Mal would tell us, "As much as we can wholeheartedly say, "Father I love you," then we are more able to say, "Father, nevertheless, not my will but Yours be done." This process helps us become freer from wanting to be dependent on, or counter-dependent to, other people and things."

Being individuated isn't just a goal for mentees, it's also a goal for me. It helps me be separate in my relationship with them. I'm not in the relationship for my needs or desires.

I teach this process of self-definition with great passion. It's helped me to make sense of my own life. It's empowering to live from a place of interdependence.

What I appreciate about your mentoring is that through the way you work I am not dependent on you. You teach me how to hear the Father and to rely on Him. It means I don't have to come after you every time I have a challenge to work out what is going on. It's helping me grow up.

STRONGHOLDS

I once worked with a very innovative youth outreach program. Tragically, the founder was diagnosed with cancer. Prior to his death he wrote to me, sharing two verses he believed were my calling:

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

I was moved by the power and strength of this truth, yet for years I couldn’t see how it applied to me. It was not a picture I had of myself—demolishing strongholds. Now I recognise this is my ministry with *divine power*.

Helping men both see the *holds* that are strong in their life and then help them break them is what I do. It’s what God did with me. I seek to get them into *excavation* mode so they can remove, tear up or trim whatever is in the way. All the while the goal is, “If the Son sets you free from sin, then become a true son and be unquestionably free!” (John 8:36 TPT)

On this freedom journey I have found two hazards that can get in the way – accusing voices and agreements we make with ourselves.

ACCUSING VOICES

Accusing voices can blind us to inner strongholds. It’s an access the evil one uses to get into our lives. The spiritual battle is real. We ignore it at our own peril. Paul describes it this way, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against

the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

In this battle raging, John refers to Satan as the “accuser of our brothers,” in his book of Revelation, “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, **who accuses them day and night** before our God’” (Revelation 12:10, emphasis mine).

He is not only accusing, he is at it day and night. He is persistent. It’s his ploy – accusing voices, that, at the very least, seek to get us off balance and at its worst seek to destroy who we are and our calling. At times, the accusations come with ferocity. Other times, it is a whisper that persists. Often unexpected, they can hijack and sabotage us.

Accusing voices bind and stifle our growth. They feed us lies that leave us awash in shame and guilt. Shame is always an outside voice. It is not an authentic voice from the core of who we are. Satan works through anything he can from our past. Fears and voices take hold of us and often lead to our paralysis.

A friend describes the way Satan works:

Satan, the accuser, dwells by our dark places and whispers from the shadows that despair is all there is. He may not possess us, but he can oppress us, using the pain of a thousand human words to draw our gaze from God, away from the light and further down into the cave of all our pain. This hiss on the wind delights to use our frailties against us, blinding us to the light and binding us to the belief we are unloved. It’s so easy to agree with the lies that devalue our souls and make ourselves at home in them. It can be a crippling and a caging, this weighing down of hope.⁴⁴

I confront this “hiss on the wind” by understanding more how the enemy works. Paul writes, “We don’t want to unwittingly give Satan an opening for yet more mischief – we’re not oblivious to his sly ways!” (2 Corinthians 2:11 MSG)

The devil will do anything to separate you from your relationship with the Father. We need to learn his sinister tricks, so that we don’t give him any power.

He is the tempter. He knows which temptations we succumb to. We are not powerless in this battle. Jesus says, “I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy ...” (Luke 10:19).

Move to the front foot. Be on the offensive against the evil one, “Take a decisive stand against him and resist his every attack with strong, vigorous faith” (1 Peter 5:9 TPT). Each day I remind myself of the verse, “The reason the Son of God was revealed was to undo and destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8 TPT).

Shame and guilt can take over, thwarting our desire to live life beyond these messages and feelings. Mentoring Japanese men I observe how difficult it is for some to even look me in the eye when they want to share what has been happening. Shame can consume them. With heads bowed often they may say, “I have failed,” and proceed to apologise as if they have wronged me. With any mentee who shares their shame and guilt with me, I want to encourage them to reflect on what happened and to help them, ‘get back on the horse’ so they can live, fully forgiven and free.

If you have sand in your eye someone may help take it out, even show you the sand that’s been removed. This one grain may have torn part of a sensitive membrane in your eye and though it’s been taken out, our eye can feel irritated as if it still remains. So it is often with our feelings world after we have confessed.

BREAKING AGREEMENTS

As we work at recognising these voices from the evil one, I want to help mentees to hear the voices within that can block our spirit

and create a brain fog. It messes up how we feel about ourselves, God, and others.

Understanding how to break agreements has profoundly freed many mentees. One mentee told me he's broken over 120 agreements.

John Eldredge writes of the power of agreements:

Agreements are deeply rooted in our lives, some so historic and familiar we barely even recognise them. What Satan is hoping to secure from us is an agreement—that often very subtle but momentous shift in us where we believe the spin, we go with the feeling, we accept as reality the deception. (It always feels so true). Once we buy into the lie, make the agreement, we come under the spell, come under the influence of that interpretation of events. Then it pretty much plays itself out; it becomes self-fulfilling. Fight it, resist it, send it packing to the outer reaches of hell. Recognise what is at stake here. The Kingdom teeters on the hundred small choices we make every day.⁴⁵

Those childhood vows are very dangerous things. We must renounce them. Before we are entirely convinced that they aren't true, we must reject the messages of our wounds. It's a way of unlocking the door to Jesus. Agreements lock the door from the inside. Renouncing the agreements unlocks the door to him.⁴⁶

Fear is the captive that holds us back. Fear is at the root of most lies. Agreements are enslaving – they shape how we see ourselves.⁴⁷

Have you heard these voices before? “I will never be good enough, God really can't forgive me for what I have done, if people

knew about my past no one would like me, I'm going to be a disappointment to my wife, any woman, etc."

How do we break these agreements? I spend time exploring with mentees trying to help them discover and articulate their agreements. They are not true, yet they still have an ongoing influence and power over us.

Recognising that this is warfare, we put on the armour and pray together as we break them. I invite them to bring it to the cross and encourage them to cut any agreement and ties with the sword of the Spirit.

It's powerful and profound. I relay Paul's words, "At last, we have freedom, for Christ has set us free! We must always cherish this truth and firmly refuse to go back into the bondage of our past" (Galatians 5:1 TPT).

Jesus offered healing to my wounds. Insecurities and lies were called out and dismissed, agreements broken. I began to see myself as the Father sees me, one who Jesus died for, and who the Spirit loves to fill and transform.

PARKING

How can we avoid listening to the clamouring noise and voices of our soul? C.S. Lewis writes:

The real problem of the Christian life comes where people do not usually look for it. It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in.⁴⁸

My spirit knows this noise is unwelcome and unwanted. The growth comes in learning to acknowledge it, park it and choose beyond it. Parking doesn't mean avoiding; rather it is holding on till it is right to move out of parking to face whatever issues need to be faced.

There is power in naming what's going on. Awareness before change. Eldredge describes it as:

You say something you regret. You drop the ball on a project. You feel terrible. But you say to yourself, 'Just because I made a mistake doesn't mean I'm a failure. I am deeply loved. I am accepted in Christ.' I'm telling you – this sort of emotional resilience changes your life ... The temptation will come over your emotions, your feelings – it doesn't feel like God is listening; it doesn't feel like he's coming through. You must not let those emotions undermine your faith.⁴⁹

It's a great joy to watch mentees being set free through becoming aware of what is going on inside of them.

A mentee told me how things weren't going well at work. The next time we spoke he told me how his boss, a Christian lady, called him into her office and fired him. He felt hurt, bewildered. He'd had no indication that he was not doing well. A part of him was angry and wanted to lash out. As the meeting finished she asked him, "Is there anything you want to say? With all the strength he could muster he said, *I know you're a Christian, so I want to bless you. I want to bless you in this job and bless your family and bless everything you do in your life!* She was totally taken aback by his response. He was too! Somehow, he managed to park his hurt and sadness and chose to bless her.

It is easy for our first response in conflict or after a fall to hook our shame. We blame ourselves or others. It's significant when we can catch the feeling (however strong) and move beyond

it. Consider how Jesus was able to manage His feeling world. Knowing what lay ahead of Him, He was still able to say to the disciples the night before He died, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15). Hours later, He let out his fears and still could pray, “Not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

Hanging on the cross he ensured His mother would be cared for. And in all His pain He said, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Jesus could do this because He was complete.

To be a mentor, you don’t have to have “fixed your stuff.” Rather, it’s about having a clearer sense of what you’re struggling with, and parking it effectively enough to be able to listen to others and care for them. Then, when the moment is right, return to what’s been parked and begin or continue addressing any of the issues.

In this battle taking place there are casualties. We are all too familiar with them. Satan is prowling, seeking to destroy what the Father is building. He will do anything to work against the advancing Kingdom. The reality is you can’t live a lie and get away with it – you can’t live a double life. Jesus is clear, “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known” (Luke 12:2 ESV).

All of this causes me to become hyper-vigilant. Hebrews 10:31 says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And it is. This is why I commit to daily drills – disciplines to help an intention of godliness become a habit. This isn’t theory. It’s a real battle and it asks everything of us.

8

A PROCESS OF MENTORING

We need the nurturing of the spirit if we are to overcome the flesh

— Mal Garvin

When we are busy, the Father is quiet

— Morgan Snyder

*You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover
it within himself*

— Galileo Galilei

*The leader of the past was a person who told, the leader of the future
will be a person who asks*

— Peter Drucker

MENTORING BEYOND IMITATION

What is unique and initiating about mentorship is it allows ongoing and committed relationship to refine and challenge us. Otherwise, we leave the inspiration of motivational speeches and moments with a hope that usually fades without consistent nourishment. I've had hundreds of inspiring conversations with good friends and wise men that were moments of breakthrough and clarity, but the excitement and stirring of those realisations were rarely followed up with consistent attention and committed living, and so revelation slowly faded into apathy and comfortable habits.

It is too simple to try to copy those we admire or those around us who we want to imitate. But fading moments and mere imitation will always leave us tired and wanting more.

Mentors do not just walk ahead, but also walk alongside and offer a unique lens found only in relationship. You cannot be transformed merely by watching what someone is like and attempting to copy them. Transformation comes from vulnerability and intimacy. It comes when your heart is on the line

Mentorship helps to break us free from the hollow house of imitation and forces us to weather the heights and depths of living full lives from our core, from our spirit. Mentorship helps to break us from selfish obsession and frees us to enter the realities around us; the reality of God; the reality of ourselves; the reality of others; the reality of a broken world and the reality of hope that heals and love that restores.

— JH

A mentee recalls a mentoring session:

We began with some simple “hey-how-are-ya.” Marty told me about how he was back in France, and had hunkered down for the next month working on his book. I told him a little of how life was for me.

He revealed how he’s just had a bout with temptation – fighting the urge to go online.

“You don’t say,” I said, “I fell victim to that yesterday morning.” From there the tone was set. I felt free to open up.

“I’ve struggled with a variety of disappointments lately. My best buddy hadn’t sent a message for a long time. I send him messages and he rarely replies, let alone making an effort to catch up on the phone.”

“Can I ask you why you haven’t said anything?”

“I don’t know. Guess I haven’t gotten around to it.”

He probed me, “Are you committed to this friendship?”

“The guy is just living his life, I guess. I’m not going to go out of my way to talk to him.”

“I wonder if sometimes you don’t speak up because you want to avoid conflict, not willing to rub up against people.”

“Yea ... “ my voice trailed off. I sensed he was right. I thought I was a guy who wasn’t afraid to speak my mind ... maybe I wasn’t.

I felt a determination within me to send him an email to let him know.

That commitment cracked open the conversation further. I spoke of a few other challenges in my relationships.

"I see it comes from a fear of sticking my neck out to let myself be truly seen."

"So what does your spirit want to say to you about this?"

It began to hit me ... all at once. Everything in the last month has been trying to point me to this truth: I wasn't gratifying my spirit, I wasn't letting my inner self be truly seen or known, firstly to myself and then to others. I was living life based on fear. No wonder I'd been dry this last month.

Recent books, conversations, even subtle longings ... God was trying to show me something.

Dots connecting.

I thought: God is on to me. This is big.

It was a surreal moment – like when the twist happens at the end of a movie, and suddenly the whole movie makes sense in a completely new light.

This fiery passion, my spirit, I've been hiding from myself and from the world around me. I have a fear people might not like it; it might not be palatable to some people. Man, that is a sad way to live.

I said to Marty, with watering eyes, "I haven't been able to feel God's presence at all for a little while. It's like He's been absent. I'm starting to see. He's been looking out for me, leading me to this one revelation that has exposed some of my deepest insecurities. He is taking me into a new freedom."

What I was really hearing in that conversation was my spirit. As it was given a voice, I felt beloved, secure. I knew, really knew, I was a son. It's there inside, waiting to break out if only I would stop bowing to fears that keep it caged.

I felt so free. Our spirits prayed together

"Thanks mate. It's so good to know you by my side, praying. It's great walking together."

A PURE HEART

A mentoring session rarely follows any set pattern. It's the challenge and adventure of mentoring. Before we meet together, I find it a helpful preparation to reflect from a reservoir of what I am continuing to learn. Often, my spirit will check my attitude before I go into a mentoring session. My goal is to be a channel through whom the Holy Spirit can work.

I know if I'm tired, my soul will be noisier than usual. If I bring frustrations, a hurriedness, or anything unresolved from my day, it will be challenging to hear my spirit and to truly hear them. I ask where my heart is. How strong is my desire and passion to help?

I want to come with a pure heart, so I am in the best place to help mentees grow. It may mean having a moment beforehand with the Father to confess anything.

Every morning, first thing, I intentionally put on the armour. Sometimes I do it throughout the day because it slips. I know that there are times I can hear stories from mentees that could distract and feed my flesh. Without my shield up, and armour on I will, at best, be distracted, at worst lose my way. If I'm not present, how can I help them?

I review any notes or emails from our last time. I remind myself that people come to mentoring with a wide range of expectations of what awaits. Some come with joy and a determination to grow, others with fears, sadness and pain.

I pray I'll be able to welcome them wherever they are. I ask the Father for insight and wisdom, to be alive in my spirit. As God and I connect, I know I will intuitively know how to proceed.

With a clear head, an awareness of what is happening within me, and an alive spirit, I'm ready to bring the best of myself to this session and more able to bring out the most authentic version of the mentee.

GETTING UNDERWAY

Some begin by lighting a candle – a symbol of God's Presence, light in the darkness, fire, and illumination of the Spirit of Truth. Early on, after the initial greetings and the social oil of conversations, we pray. We're inviting God into every conversation. It's over to Him to lead. We're welcoming Jesus and asking the Spirit of Truth to join us.

I try to create enough space, so they choose the level they want to initially share. Some jump straight in. "Why wait?" is their approach. Others need more time to warm up so we may chat about their life. They may have previously asked me to pray for a particular thing or set a goal from the last time, so we review how they're progressing.

HEARING TWO VOICES

While it may not arise at every mentoring session, there is always an invitation to explore what is happening with their flesh. The flesh is never happy when truth is brought to the light. It will do anything to resist. When my mentor would ask me to tell him what I didn't want to tell him, I recall being both challenged and grateful that someone truly was asking what life was like for me on the inside. This brought great relief.

Within us are two competing and distinct voices. The first that speaks – often loudest – is adaptive, accusing, and at times, whining. It's the voice of our own needs. The voice of the unresolved within us. At the very least, it distracts, but often it can overwhelm, be angry, jealous or frustrated.

To be free of this voice, it needs to be heard. There may be tears, pain, disappointment, embarrassment. I say to it, "Let it out, let it come." I know it's not easy.

I listen. I ask questions – particularly asking them how they're managing their flesh. I may feed back what I'm hearing. I am trying to do anything to help the mentees rid themselves of the voice of the flesh by bringing it into the light. If this voice isn't heard, the truth that is waiting, can be smothered.

From time to time I check for understanding. I want them to know I've truly heard what they have said. Once the flesh has been exposed, there is room for the other voice to be heard. "I wonder if there is another part of you that wants to speak up?"

I give it time, nothing forced. When it comes (and I find it generally does) it can at first be quiet. It wonders if it's safe to speak up. If the voice of their spirit knows it's being heard, its volume increases. As it finds strength, my spirit rejoices. When I hear this voice, my confidence grows. I know they're going to get there.

They are hearing the truest part of themselves. The atmosphere is changing. The real work is happening. Each time is different. It is taking place at many different levels, with different themes. Yet this pattern I've observed over the years.

Here's an example of how an internal dialogue played out with a young man wrestling with his flesh:

When I am with my girlfriend, I can hear this voice tempting me, "It will feel so good. You will be more valuable to her. She wants you. Satisfy her and validate yourself. You need it."

As this is happening my body is crying out, demanding to be fed. "You can't avoid it, stop stressing out." It's a strong pleading, almost screaming, "I deserve it. What's wrong with having sex. I will feel so much better."

A WILLING SPIRIT

Yet ... I know it's not all of me. There is another part willing to wait. It's not always strong but I can hear it now.

“What does it say?” I ask.

I love you God. I want to do what's right. It's not about my feelings. It is about what is right.

If I give in it will steal life from us both. We'll be sorry. I am just being a boy wanting all I can get.

I know who I am. I've got to man up to this battle. My body is demanding. These are choices I have to make over my flesh...but it's strong and it can take me over. It's hard to quit pleasure, but I'm going to. I want to choose over these desires.

I am watching God grow me.

When this dialogue happens, I am witnessing the mentee taking responsibility over his flesh. I recall one mentee saying directly to his flesh, *Whatever you want flesh, it's not okay. I am telling you to stop!* It helps to be this direct.

Jeremiah writes, “The Lord says ... if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman” (Jeremiah 15:19 NASB). This is the point I want to help mentees with; to distinguish between the voice of the flesh and the voice of their spirit.

The precious emerges as the flesh is *crucified*. God can use them as His spokesperson.

I encourage them to keep digging. To discover more of this internal battle.

Truth is unravelling—a freedom follows.

WELCOMING THEIR SPIRIT

With the noise of the flesh released, there is space created for their spirit to grow stronger. It's now more available to bring insight.

Every response to the questions inviting them to connect to their spirit is unique. Sometimes there is silence. I let it hang. Often it can be a long silence. I never fear it for I know most are going deep, looking around. I am in no hurry.

I've observed a quick response to the question of what their spirit is saying may not always be totally authentic. It could simply be a replay of the past, the *right* answer, the one they *should* give.

When a willing spirit is around, there's a desire to respond with authenticity. Often there is spontaneous laughter or a smile. I often point it out as they may not be conscious of it

More of their true self is available. If there is room for their spirit to be heard, it will grow. In fact at times its strength and power can leave us both breathless. When their spirit speaks I describe it as a sacred moment. I'm a privileged onlooker, listening and observing.

When mentees are wholeheartedly coming from their spirit, I don't need to ask what their spirit is saying. I just know what it is saying. It's all over the conversation. If I sense there's a hesitancy to trust or listen to their spirit, I ask, "Can I just check something? How would you feel if I asked you, 'What does your spirit want to say?'" I don't want to force anything. It is all about process and my job is to trust the process.

As they hear their spirit, I don't need to say anything. There are moments when they tell me how helpful the time was. I smile and think basically all I've done is hold myself back and give them space to speak up and help them see what is going on. Hearing their spirit vacuums their internal noise.

As they slow down and connect with their spirit they are now in a position to hear the voice of the Father. Much of what I am

seeking to do is to build towards this question, “What is God the Father saying to you?”

I observe them stopping, closing their eyes, going in and seeking to hear the Father’s voice.

Hearing the voice of the Father changes everything. One mentee wrote:

Marty asked the question that I’ve come to expect in mentoring. It draws out answers I can’t predict: “What is the Father saying?” We’d begun our conversation speaking of my relationship with my girlfriend. I’d shared about my past. I recalled how in high school being told, “I wasn’t boyfriend material.”

This belief became a self-imposed limit to who I was and what I could be. I would be okay but never outstanding, always, and in everything, average. That night the Father spoke four words that continue to ring inside of me. “I don’t make average.”

These words set me on a journey of tearing down lies that had grown over me, choking what it meant to be a man. I am thankful I heard these four words. I no longer settle for being just average. I continue to fight the lies and the fears they breathe out. God didn’t make me to be average – he made me to fight.

Hearing God speaking is both profound and holy. More real than we can imagine.

Justin Camp asks how can we know it really is God speaking?

Ultimately, His speaking is a mystery. There are times when we intuitively just know, down deep somewhere ... His voice is unique – whether it comes through His

still, small voice or through the words of others. It's something we can come to recognise.⁵⁰

I can't recall any time in listening to mentees hearing the voice of God, where anything that they've shared has contradicted the Word of God. This is our filter, our plumb line.

Will they get the voice of God right 100%? I doubt it. They are having a go. I often remind them that a helpful way forward is to check it with others. Paul says, "Together we have the mind of Christ," (1 Corinthians 2:15) and Luke writes of the decisions in the Council of Jerusalem, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ..." (Acts 15:28).

God has given us each other so test it out with those you trust. I hold it loosely what I am hearing from God. Sometimes it can be very direct. I know He is speaking. More often if I have a word for someone, I preface it with, "I sense God is saying this."

I am helping strengthen them to do this life-changing work. I want to help them to carry this ability well after any mentoring session.

FINISHING UP

Often, near the end of our time, I sense a 'right word' – a blessing from Scripture. My spirit in touch with God's Spirit lets me know what's right to share. It helps to be as familiar with God's Word as possible, using it as a "workman approved" (2 Timothy 2:15). I am grateful that in my early years of being disciplined, I learnt a different verse each day.

I often refer to Psalm 119. "How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalms 119:9-11).

I have begun mentoring a guy, employing everything you've sown into my life and trying my best to pour into him. I'm reminded of why it's so important to know the Bible well. I struggle at times to find the verse that may be helpful. I want to learn the Word of God more and get the Holy Spirit to support and teach me and my mentee.

As the hour (or longer) approaches, we finish by praying together. I may ask, "How can I pray for you?" I write it down to ensure I do.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- ✦ ***Arrange the next meeting*** – As we are finishing up, we will often make a time in our calendars for when we'll next speak.
- ✦ ***Take notes*** – During our mentoring time, I find it useful to take a few notes as they speak. I type it up and email it to them as a reminder, particularly of their action steps.
- ✦ ***Homework*** – I often make suggestions of what they can do. It may be an article or book to read, a video to watch or a challenge to work through till we meet again.
- ✦ ***Pray for them*** – I run most days and as I run I pray for each mentee. Often the Father speaks as I pray. There may be a word to pass on to them or an action I can take. Some days I may fast when I know there is a significant challenge before them.
- ✦ ***Celebrate significant events*** – I try to remember birthdays, find a way to get to their weddings, and remember and pray for important events in their lives like final exams, the days leading up to an engagement, weddings, or the birth of a child.
- ✦ ***Recommend additional materials*** – I try to contribute or encourage them to enrol in courses, conferences, retreats or experiences that may help them grow. I pass on books that

I sense may help. Randomly, I send worship songs, articles, devotions – anything I sense the Holy Spirit leads me to share.

QUESTIONS IN MENTORING

Mentees appreciate that I ask questions. Questions help mentees to go deep, explore and face issues.

Regularly, mentees ask, “What should I do? Can you give me some advice?”

A part of me wants to rush to answer. That’s more about me wanting to let them see how much I know. Thankfully I have learnt the discipline that when the questions are asked, I smile and respond, “What do you think you need to do?”

It’s theirs to struggle with, their journey to go on. My answer could well get in the way of their discovery.

This discipline has moved my mentoring to a different level.

You don’t give answers to the questions I bring. I come to mentoring with the unresolved questions most of the time. I know you could answer based on what you have experienced in your life with God, but you don’t. You guide me to what God is saying. You ask my spirit questions trusting I can hear it. As I do that, I find that God answers many of my questions.

The main question I ask is, “What is your spirit saying?” This pushes it back onto them to wrestle for an answer. I am confident if they want to face it, they will uncover answers themselves.

When you ask me, ‘What’s your spirit saying?’ I find it helpful as it helps me to take responsibility for my questions and reminds me of my own autonomy. I know that the answer is within me.

Jesus was the master of asking questions. He would respond differently each time to questions from the Pharisees, often

answering their question with a question. His interaction in John 8 with the woman caught in adultery is powerful, “Angry, they kept insisting that he answer their question, so Jesus stood up and looked at them and said, ‘Let’s have the man who has never had a sinful desire throw the first stone at her.’ And then he bent over again and wrote some more words in the dust” (John 8:7-8 TPT).

What a beautiful way to care for her. A question silencing everyone. I want that skill.

An author writing about the Russian novelist Tolstoy, says of him and his questions:

[Tolstoy’s] was a life characterised as much by seeking as by finding. Indeed, the meaning he was striving for reveals itself more in the search than in the discovery, and asking the question of life is more vital than answering it. **For it is by raising the question that the spirit engages in its struggle for voice.**⁵¹ (emphasis mine)

I seek to ask questions and help strengthen their spirit to be engaged so it is truly heard.

Early on in our mentoring I noticed Marty was a good questioner. They were questions I’d never asked of myself. First, he built a bridge between us. Here I felt safe to be myself. At times his questions ripped to the core of me yet they were never forced, nor did I feel judged. They often involved asking me to listen to my own spirit. I had never tried that – not even thought about it. It helped me find answers. It was like the more he asked questions the more I felt loved and cared for. My heart felt lighter. I was learning how to find answers.

Rainer Maria Rilke makes a profound observation around asking questions:

I want to ask you, as clearly as I can, to bear with patience all that is unresolved in your heart, and try to love the questions themselves ... For everything must be lived. Live the questions now, perhaps then, someday, you will gradually, without noticing, live into the answer.⁵²

This is what I seek to do in helping mentees:

Love the questions.

Live into the answers.

Respect the journey.

Trust the process.

PART 3

Mentoring and the Human Spirit

9

UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The spirit is the highest and noblest part of man which qualifies him to lay hold of incomprehensible, eternal, invisible things

— Martin Luther

For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them?

— 1 Corinthians 2:11 TPT

Just as the body needs food, so the soul needs meaning, and the spirit needs ultimate meaning

— Richard Rohr

Our spirit is the “life spark” that gives direction to heart and soul

— Jorg Pederson

REFLECTIONS ON THE HUMAN SPIRIT (I)

Inited mentees to describe how they see and experience the human spirit.

Our spirit is our divine core that reverses the decay of bondage and confusion. It is the place where holy fire seizes our body, mind, and heart, and pulls them into relational alignment with the realities of Christ. It is older and wiser than our doubts and fiercer than our fears. Our spirit is our eternal bastion of freedom and our concierge to sacred love. It is where we are given eyes to see and ears to hear the deep truths and ancient chorus of creation and its creator.”

Fear and our spirit are opposites. Our spirit is the voice inside that is able to speak the loudest when fear is not given space to be present. It follows love and hope and trust, not in ignorance of doubts but oftentimes in spite of doubts. Love hopes, fear cripples. The spirit accompanies you through life aware of suffering, aware of pain, giving courage to you to trust that our Creator promises deliverance, promises there won't be pain and suffering forever.

My spirit is me. It exists to make me free; free from any captivity. It wants to be known – it is hopeful for it knows there is a true self within me. It helps me to be real, who I was meant to be – my deepest self, my innermost being.

The reality is I can't explain it in words to convince anyone. Our spirit is to be experienced. It is a mystery yet it is the most real, most dangerous thing about me.

My spirit lets me get away with N O T H I N G. It lets me know every single time if I do something out of a desire that isn't from God.

I always wondered what running a marathon would be like. I had run half marathons. As I finished, I would marvel at people willing to achieve that same distance again.

I finally committed to a full marathon. A mentee from Finland, an ultra-marathon runner, suggested a training program. I asked how he disciplined himself to keep going when it felt as if all of him wanted to quit.

He smiled and told me how he takes on the voices within him that plead, begging him to stop. "I say to them, 'Ahh, I know you. You want me to give up. You are not after my best interests. You are after what is easiest. I am not going to listen to you.'"

At dawn, as the marathon got underway, I became emotional. The starter's gun sounded and a wave of sobbing overcame me. It was full of such joy. I'd made it to the starting line. I was living a long-held dream. At 63, I was about to test my body in a way that it had never quite experienced.

The first 10 kilometres were pain-free. I was in a rhythm. I worshipped, prayed and waved at people cheering us on. My spirit was alive.

By the halfway mark I was within my goal. The training was paying off. My body began dropping hints – now was really the time to slow down, take a rest, just walk. It was fighting my goal of completing it in under five hours without stopping.

These voices begging me to stop grew louder, stronger. Parallel to this, my spirit was countering. I was reaching out to other runners, worshipping and even joked with some in the crowd. I surprised myself. A determined voice assured me, repeatedly and encouraged me, "Don't give up."

I hit the thirty-eight kilometre mark, 4 kilometres to go. Voices within me had moved beyond appealing. Now they were demanding, screaming, "Stop! You have no choice. It's not possible." Yet, an equal determination from my spirit, "This is it – it's

what you have trained for, remember the goal. Come on, one foot in front of the other. Keep going, Marty.”

Looming ahead was the finish line. I recall the joy of bursting through. There was a medal, yet I was more moved by my friend crying with joy at the finishing line.

I wept too. I’d made it. I crushed my goals. I was alive ... literally, and in my spirit. I had responded to a greater purpose. I witnessed the power of a strong spirit.

BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

We are body, soul, and spirit. Our body includes our physical characteristics, chemical influences, and our five senses. Our soul is our personality, internal world, thoughts and feelings where we experience emotions. Our spirit is that part of us reaching out to the transcendent, made in the image of God.

Mal would often say:

Through my body I am aware of the world around me,
through my soul I am aware of myself,
through my spirit I am aware of God.

An Australian Pastor Josh Mayo says, “I am spirit, I have a soul and I live in a body.”

Body, soul, and spirit are spoken only once all together in Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:23). There are instances in both the Old and New Testaments where pairs (body/soul; soul/spirit; spirit/body) are spoken of to describe different ways in which human beings live in the world.

Imagine a Venn diagram of three circles of body, soul and spirit interlocking; illustrating an interdependent system. For example, a problem with our health can affect our functioning in other areas. Anger may lead to increased bile and ulcers. When

our spirit is crushed or thwarted, it may lead to disturbed sleep and less appetite.

When we are sick our body can begin to close down. It can affect our spirit, if we let it. It's a challenge to hold on and have access to the best part of us. Cut off from our rhythms, we can observe ourselves becoming disconnected, not attuned to others, and losing our sensitivity to God.

Our connection with God can give us physical and soul energy enabling us to see the world around us in a new way and to relate to others differently. A mentee, sick with coronavirus yet alive in his spirit, texted, *My body is weak but my spirit is stronger* than ever. I am enjoying who I am. Temptations, come on! You can't get me!

Mal writes, "Alienation from our spirit produces inner chaos. It is one thing, with skilled help, to recognise the emotional soup that is setting off disharmony between our body, soul and spirit... The key that unlocks the confusion is the spirit, it leads to shalom."⁵³

THE NOISE OF OUR SOUL

The soul refers to our emotions, personality and intellect. It is where we store our feelings about ourselves. Through the soul we become aware of our "self." It clamours for our attention. It needs a space to release pain and frustration. You can recognise its noise often when you wake up in the morning, or when pain is experienced.

Carol McLeod writes:

Your soul is the seat of your personality, your feelings, desires, affections, and aversions. Quite simply, your soul is the birthplace of the entire spectrum of human emotion. When the Bible references your soul, it is referencing that which influences your emotional responses to life.⁵⁴

When our soul is down we can speak to it from our spirit and command it to rejoice. We see David doing this in the Psalms, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God” (Psalms 43:5).

Worship helps our soul come into line with our spirit.

A mentee was in a marriage that was going nowhere. His wife had fallen out of love with both God and him. She wanted no physical intimacy, and slept in another room. Yet they remained, surprisingly, good friends. He said to me, “The only healthy part of the marriage was the soul – we get on well together.” He could manage the lack of intimacy (just), but with no spirit connection he knew there was no future. He would tell people that he felt *one-third* married—married only in soul but not spirit or body.

OUR SPIRIT—THE INTEGRATING PART OF US

The goal that can liberate, is for the spirit to be the integrating part of us. J.R.R. Tolkien says, “It is not the strength of the body, but the strength of the spirit.”

Jentezen Franklin writes, “If you were simply a ‘spirit-being,’ your spiritual potential would be unlimited. But you must constantly contend with your soul ... and cope with the needs and appetites of your physical body.”⁵⁵

Destro and Pesce say, “The spirit when in contact with God’s Spirit not only influences the mind, but through the mind influences the body, finally influencing the whole person.”⁵⁶

A willing spirit gets me out of bed for a 6 am prayer meeting, even though my body is craving more sleep. It can be similar when I begin to mentor. I may be feeling tired yet my spirit wants to engage. I watch it come alive.

I can walk into a room feeling a little overwhelmed, not particularly present to myself, yet despite the noise in both my soul and body, if I’m asked to pray, I stop, listen, and from deep within, my

spirit rises and I pray in a way that surprises me. Afterward, I ask, where did that come from? I know it's from a spirit that, given the chance, is always willing.

EXPLORING OUR SPIRIT

We are firstly spiritual, because our God is Spirit and He can be known and approached through our spirit. We were made in the image of God and He breathed his breath, His nature, into us. (Genesis 2:7) He placed His truth deep in our spirit.

Our spirit connects us to God. It is the part of us that prays and worships. It's natural and intuitive. Rollo May writes, "This spirit is the breath of life God breathes into Adam. It gives vivacity, energy, liveliness, courage, and ardour to life."⁵⁷

It is "The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person ..." (Zechariah 12:1).

Previously we've spoken of Jesus saying to His three closest friends, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38). I use this verse daily, trying to locate my willing spirit, and helping those I mentor to find theirs.

In Romans 8, Paul unveils the truth of how the Holy Spirit and human spirit team together. Nicky Gumbel refers to the Book of Romans as, "The 'Himalayas' of the New Testament."⁵⁸ Romans 8 is the Mount Everest. The summit of Everest are these verses where Paul describes "those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Romans 8:14–17). It's in these verses where "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16). The Message translation reads, "We greet God with a childlike 'What's next, Papa?' God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are."

Our true identity is found as the Holy Spirit joins with our spirit. Exploring the Scriptures has brought me further understanding as to the role of our spirit. I've searched for any references

(or hints of references) to the human spirit. The list is compiled in Appendix 1.

What Watchman Nee has written in his book, *Release of the Spirit*, I have sensed over a number of years:

One rather remarkable thing is that God does not mean to distinguish between His Spirit and our spirit. There are many places in the Bible where it is impossible to determine whether the word 'spirit' indicates our human spirit or God's Spirit. Bible translators, from Luther down to present day scholars who have laboured on the English versions, have been unable to decide if the word 'spirit,' as used in many places in the New Testament, refers to the human spirit or to the Spirit of God.⁵⁹

Here is one example. John 4:23 in the ESV reads, "True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth ..." The NIV has the same translation except for the "s" in spirit, "True worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth ..."

How beautiful that the Holy Spirit and our spirit work so closely together. Sometimes I wonder "Was that my spirit or the Holy Spirit?" and I smile and think it was both.

Watchman Nee develops it further:

We often say that the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit, but we find it hard to discern which is the Holy Spirit and which is our own spirit. The Holy Spirit and our spirit have become so mingled; while each is unique they are not easily distinguished ... Since the Holy Spirit and our spirit are joined into one, (1 Cor. 6.17), they can be distinguished only in name, not in fact. And since the release of one means the release of both,

others can touch the Holy Spirit whenever they touch our spirit.

The Spirit of God employs the human spirit as His carrier, and through it He is brought to man. Everyone who has received grace has the Holy Spirit dwelling in his spirit.⁶⁰

DESCRIBING OUR SPIRIT

How can I describe what the spirit connection is like? It defies being put in a box. I know it, through its effect on me. It's pure, strong and authentic. Yet how do I articulate what it is in any way that may convince someone. These days I am happy to just realise it's to be known and lived – rather than be analysed. I “fix my eyes on what is unseen” (2 Corinthians 4:18). C.S. Lewis observes, “The best is perhaps what we understand least.”⁶¹

I find when you see, or even feel your spirit – it's not complicated. To really know it you have to trust it like a child. It's real and it works. Something touches us deep in our spirit. Sometimes it feels like it's a gut feeling. There are times when our spirit surges, like a river, a flow, expanding, running through us. We become friends with it.

You have to want to hear it speaking to you. I recall sharing about the spirit with a mentee. He told me, *I am open. I have never heard this emphasis before. It's a whole new language, a new way of thinking.*

The more you become aware of the human spirit, the more you discover it everywhere! I appreciate seeing it in others. Daniel Dias, a famous Brazilian Paralympian spoke to us during the Paralympics in Tokyo 2021. As he talked we didn't see his disability – we saw his spirit. He was complete. He knew who he was. He told us his parents didn't see his handicap – they just saw him as a great gift from God.

Our spirit is beyond culture. We have lived in six different cultures. How have we managed to settle and assimilate so quickly? We have seen beyond the culture to their spirit, the truest part of them. It means we quickly become friends.

OUR SPIRIT AND FRIENDSHIP

Our spirit reaches out to others. It draws people in, it gives them a taste of something different. It has a fragrance, a beauty, an aroma that lifts us to a different place. A free spirit lights up a room. When you are near someone living from their spirit, somehow you glow in their warmth. This touching of spirits revives and builds each other up. Our spirit grasps a deeper way of relating.

How do you recognise a 'spirit friend'? When they speak, something resonates within you. You know you're both filled with the same Holy Spirit.

Our spirit is an attractor. People see it in us. When the Message translator Eugene Peterson died, Bono from U2, at a London concert, dedicated a song to him describing him as "a beautiful spirit who opened up the Scriptures." Our spirit leads to authentic fellowship where spirit touches spirit. It's where "Deep calls to deep" (Psalm 42:7). It is the depth of your being calling for a touch of my depth.

I know when I am truly communicating. It is the fellowship of the spirit. Paul writes, "Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends" (Philippians 2:2 MSG). It is the goal in relationships. If our spirits are present, then the relationship becomes "deep-spirited". We become kindred spirits. You meet someone from your spirit and you sense you have known them for years.

C.S. Lewis says, "Friendship, ... is born at the moment when one man says to another 'What! You too? I thought that no one but myself...'"⁶² Paul speaks of friends who have "refreshed my spirit as well as yours" (1 Corinthians 16:18 ESV). I enjoy people around me who refresh my spirit. I want to be a refresher of spirits.

In 1 Samuel we read, “After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself” (1 Samuel 18:1). Soulmates.

Watchman Nee observes:

Whenever people are fellowshiping (with a free spirit) they encounter a spirit, a clean spirit ... Spiritual fellowship is much more than the exchange of ideas and opinions – it is the interaction of spirits. This kind of fellowship is possible only after our outward man is shattered and our spirit is thus released to touch the spirit of others.⁶³

I observe that when I see someone’s spirit, I quickly, almost surprisingly, become friends. I have the opportunity to glimpse the true part of who they are. It’s beautiful, natural, not forced or phoney. Intuitively my spirit knows what is going on.

Watchman Nee says, “Thank God, that inasmuch as you allow people to contact your spirit, you allow them to contact God. Your spirit has brought the Holy Spirit to man.”⁶⁴

I often become spirit-friends with those I mentor. A mentee, spoke to me about another mentee I introduced him to:

It is good being with people that have the same spirit. When I met your mentee I saw his commitment both to God and to his spirit. I literally could feel his spirit. I just knew he was a brother. I’ve learnt how to become friends with myself by listening to my spirit. I sense he’s discovered that, too.

Discovering, welcoming, and living from our spirit speeds up relationships. When you speak from your spirit, there’s a fresh language. I can be playful, relaxed, I can be myself. People notice. You recognise a spirit friend by something deep resonating within you. C.S. Lewis observes a spirit friendship:

Are not all lifelong friendships born at the moment when at last you meet another human being ... you are looking for, watching for, listening for? You have never had it ... Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say 'Here at last is the thing I was made for.' We cannot tell each other about it. It is the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want.⁶⁵

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE SPIRIT

As our spirit becomes more integrated into our lives, it becomes our ministry. It reaches out, desiring to free others. People glimpse more of what God is like when I am living fully myself.

Our spirit gets passed on. A mentee told me:

Your attitude, kindness and love has been next to me even when you are not around.

Once our spirit is more available, we open up and so do others. The gifts God has entrusted to us are lived out through our spirit. I have a gift of encouragement. My spirit wells up inside. I can't help but speak an encouraging word to someone. It's such a "natural child" part of me that I am often not aware I'm doing it. It's not forced, it flows spontaneously – from the overflow.

Our spirit is child-like and open. Want to know what a free spirit is like? Become like a little child... My niece's daughter on her first day of school reported excitedly that she'd had a wonderful day, "I made a friend, learnt how to speak French and met my future husband!" My niece reported, "All up a very successful day!"

Mal alerted me to the four characteristics of an alive human – someone living from their spirit. They are spontaneity, self-awareness, intimacy and creativity. I use these four as my checklist of how alive and free I am. I share it with mentees. "These four qualities grow as your spirit contours to become more a part of who you are ... What does home look like? What does it feel like? It

is where our spirit has learned to be comfortably attached to, and inspired by the Divine Spirit.”⁶⁶

Our spirit is a wellspring within us. It’s the most significant part of us. Hearing it and trusting it helps us become fully ourselves. It’s our deepest self, our innermost being, the inner toolkit, our navigational system.

David writes, “You delight in truth in the inward parts” (Psalms 51:6 LEB). Our spirit is our inner truth-teller that wants to help us see what is truly happening in any situation. I recall a mentee telling me his spirit said to him, *Why are you doing this? It’s not who you are.*

Our spirit is the life-giving force within us. If our spirit is fresh, connected strongly to God and properly fed, it influences our personality. It’s because God and our spirit are working together. It’s our internal supervisor. It exists to make us free and it lives on the edge of excitement and anticipation. For me I may be sixty-six, but on the inside, I am not even twenty! I am convinced our spirit is ageless.

We spend so much time listening to our body and soul. Is it not worth investing time in listening to our spirit? When you are praying, it’s your spirit speaking to God. When you’re hearing from God, He’s speaking through your spirit. It is the Father who energises our spirit.

Carol McLeod reminds us: “Understand the immense value of your spirit and take up the responsibility to guard it faithfully every day. Responsibility for a pure, clean heart and a right spirit is an imperative to walking in a fruitful relationship with Jesus.”⁶⁷

Richard Hauser writes, “If God’s Spirit has truly joined our spirit, then we have every reason to trust the deepest movements of our natures. This trust becomes a key for all spirituality.”⁶⁸

When Edith Humphrey wrote a book on the working together of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. She called it **Ecstasy and Intimacy**. She writes, “Christian spirituality is the study

and experience of what happens when the Holy Spirit meets the human spirit.”⁶⁹

Trust your spirit, find your assignment, watch how you come alive. Your spirit connected to God’s Spirit wants to become your north star, your rudder, reminding you of your destiny and purpose. Listening to your spirit calls you out to be the person God’s made you to be. Bring your spirit to mentoring. You’ll come alive and see more clearly those you are mentoring. Create the space so you can hear and engage it, then help others to do it.

Welcome your spirit to be integrated into your life. It will accompany you through life; part of the joy and the wins as well as the suffering and pain. It will empower you to trust the Father. It walks into the unknown with you – a fire in your chest and hope in your heart, always hope.

A German Philosopher in the 18th century wrote, “The time has come to proclaim a nobler humanity, the freedom of the spirit.”⁷⁰

As I write, daily tragedies are unfolding in Ukraine. Christian historian Andrej Zubov wrote on his Facebook page, “A wall of courage has grown in front of the Russian army, which it will not be able to overcome. The spirit of courage and determination to stand to the end has the hearts of Ukrainians. Ultimately, spirit always wins, especially when there are rockets and tanks on both sides.”

Spirit wins!

Trust it.

MENTORING AND LISTENING TO YOUR SPIRIT

The spirit is that part of us ... that wants more. That wants to transcend. It wants to grow ... wants to improve ourselves

— Thomas Moore

God's Spirit dwells with our spirit, and here our truest desires make themselves known. From this place we cry out to God for deeper union with him and with others

— Ruth Harley-Barton

True worship comes only from spirits made alive and sensitive by the quickening of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit ignites and energizes our spirit

— John Piper

Jesus, you're the One who set my spirit free

— Keith Green

REFLECTIONS ON THE HUMAN SPIRIT (2)

Our spirit is a core aspect of who we are as humans yet is mainly subconscious. Learn to hear it more and it becomes closer and closer to our consciousness. I sense, experience the effect of the human spirit. Some things hit deep in our spirit—we just know. It can't be tied down. Like the Trinity it can't be truly grasped. To really know it you have to trust your spirit. It is real and it works. The human spirit may be mysterious but it is not complex.

Our spirit is what truly resembles the heart of God. The closer we come to God, the more our spirit, the fire within us, burns with a passion for Him. The closer we get to the flame, the more it has a chance to consume us and become us.

Our spirit desires adventure. It's wild, not interested in playing anything safe. It wants us to do something with our life. It is rarely "sensible" and it doesn't want our heads to win. It helps us feel loved and pursued. It showers and refreshes us and looks to God to see what He is up to. It helps us know things without putting words to it.

My spirit isn't hindered by the mind's doubts. It stands up for who God has made me to be when my mind will want to question it.

Does all I experience with my spirit square with my conditioned theological categories? Nope ... yet I cannot ignore what is to me – a holy feeling in my inmost being when my spirit feels seen and recognised.

A friend reflects on the role of the spirit:

In those early days of listening to my spirit, I needed the help of a mentor, and my journal, to learn how to speak with God through my spirit, and 'get out of my head'. I had to learn how to tune-in, like a radio, and remove the static of my own messy thoughts.

I'm forty now, with two sons of my own. Most days when I wake, I start in the same default position. I've come to understand it's something along the lines of 'I'll never be good enough. No one really sees me. No one values me.' Logically this makes no sense, but it's the attitude I go into a day with if I neglect to speak with God. It results in me not seeing or valuing others and being easily irritated with my family and colleagues. I try to cover it up with a familiar pretence, but honestly, on these days I'm a bit of a jerk.

I've learned though, that if I simply start my day talking with God, through listening to my spirit instead of the rest of the noise in my head, then I'm a much kinder person to be around. It's as if that discipline allows His Spirit to be one with my spirit, in the way a hand fills and is able to use a glove. I start seeing people and loving them. Listening to God again carries me through the day until the next quiet moment where I can chat with Him.

He gives me a 'heads up' about challenges that I might face. Or points me to a colleague who isn't travelling so well which enables me to listen better; or encourage them.

He's shown me that my ministry is to love the people He has placed me with; to see them, to encourage them. I know I am a vessel for Jesus to move through me, plain, not much to look at, nothing particularly special, but full of the most precious, most expensive, most wonderful life I have ever known.

How does listening to your spirit, really communicating with God, relate to mentoring? It's simple. It allows God to minister to others

through us. Helping people hear their own spirits helps them to communicate with God and to then mentor others. Through seeing them, loving them, and calling the best out in them.

Living centred on this relationship enables us to communicate deeply with each other. Our spirit, one with His, is always searching for that connection with others, Spirit to spirit.

I've had many deep relationships, enriched by this real communication, where fear and self-doubt are left aside, and a genuine dialogue occurs.

What I learnt from Mal and Marty I try to do now, with my mates and colleagues. I speak with them from my spirit, whenever I'm present and 'in the moment.'

WHAT HELPS YOU HEAR YOUR SPIRIT?

When Mal invited me to hear my spirit I was surprised and amazed how clearly it spoke up. Previously I was intuitively aware of it; now I could truly know it and then trust it. Listening to my spirit helped me to begin to answer many of the long-held questions that had been swirling around my head for years.

I felt comfortable, peaceful even, as I heard my spirit speak. I still do. I wanted to share it with others. I realised our spirit makes itself known if we want to hear it. The more I listened and trusted my spirit, the more I saw it everywhere.

I recall talking with a Taekwondo champion who told me in his training, he had made a commitment to growing an unbreakable spirit within him. To hear your spirit, you need both discipline and commitment. A Japanese samurai, Yamaoka Tesshu said, "As a samurai, I must strengthen my character; as a human being I must perfect my spirit."

Prince Philip, husband of the late Queen Elizabeth II, said, "It is much more important that the human spirit should not be stifled by easy living."⁷¹

It's clear to me what prevents me from hearing my spirit and denying my freedom – easy living, self-doubts, confusion, shame, guilt, embarrassment. If that's playing through my mind, then it's challenging to hear my spirit. It's all too easy for unresolved issues to take me over. I find myself avoiding, becoming lazy or generally procrastinating.

Eldredge writes, "Flowing in your spirit requires creating space in our day for God, to intentionally put yourself in a place that allows you to draw upon and experience the healing power of the life of God filling you."⁷²

He adds:

Time with God each day is not academic study or getting through a certain amount of scripture. It's about connecting with God. Do whatever helps to keep the line of communication open. Sometimes I will listen to music; other times I will read scripture or a passage from a book; often I will journal; maybe I will go for a run – then there are days when all I need is silence and solitude and the rising sun. The point is simply to do whatever brings me back to my heart and the heart of God ... the whole point of a devotional life is connecting with God.⁷³

Maybe it's dancing as David danced. "Wearing a linen ephod, David danced before the Lord with all his might" (2 Samuel 6:14-15). That's a free spirit! Perhaps it's walking, enjoying a sunny day after a long winter, listening to worship music, reading a favourite Psalm, watching a sunrise, seeing leaping calves released from their stalls.

I choose to take on the noise of the soul. I journal to get out what is going on. It alerts me to any mixed motives, if I'm being phoney, exaggerating or adapting. Get the noise out and a clarity of spirit rises. This is why I encourage mentees to journal. There's so much rattling around inside. Journaling helps release the noise. It helps you know what to say. Journaling has been a lifeboat, saving me from the noise of my inner world and connecting me with my spirit. It needs a commitment to it; time alone with myself and God.

After looking at porn I went straight to my journal to figure out what went wrong and what I could have done better. I saw that after such a long period of purity going back didn't feel great at all. Writing helped me to choose to not slip into a slump. I have no desire to go back to that which overtook me.

One indication in the growth of those I mentor, is they need to talk to me less and less. They are able to work out for themselves what is going on.

I watch myself, as I give in to the flesh, my spirit drains even deadens. I lose energy (and discipline) to be intentional. From there it is all too easy to give in and wallow. I take up distractions ... texts, Facebook, newspapers, *urgent* emails, things I *should* do. It's when I fight to hear my spirit in the midst of this noise that I become more myself. Rather than hiding the best part of me, I discover the diamond in the coal.

Our spirit is always honest, often very direct. A mentee told me that he was drinking a little too much. He asked his spirit what it had to say. The response from his spirit surprised him. "Why are you asking me?" He knew in that moment his spirit wasn't impressed with the choices he was making. I asked another to listen to his spirit after he'd worked through issues around a relationship. It was clear and sharp, "You're good to go!"

The purer your spirit, the faster you can get there. To grow, you need a teachable, humble spirit.

MENTORING AND YOUR SPIRIT

Mal writes:

When we're spiritually sensitive and alive we look around for somebody more spiritually integrated to identify with; in doing so we enable our spirit which is alive in our subconscious and unconscious to become integrated and formed into our sense of self.⁷⁴

I have already written that the power of understanding mentoring is not so much helping a person to receive knowledge, but it is about them receiving that person's spirit. In mentoring, we are searching for someone to identify with, who can help us grow – someone who can help us attune, and make sense of, that which is happening within.

Mentoring works best when it flows naturally from your spirit. That way it's not forced. As you love your mentee and seek to care for their spirit, you call the best out in them. I am amazed how often in mentoring I spontaneously respond to mentees, "I love your spirit." It's even at a point where some joke with me, saying in their best attempt at an Aussie accent, "Maaate, you have a beautiful spirit!"

Interestingly I find when a mentee is coming from their spirit I find it so much easier to be present and able to help them. Mentoring is helping free their spirit so they can truly come alive. It's sacred and it's holy.

Above everything, I saw that you were free in your spirit and there was no agenda. That made me trust you. There was a purity I experienced from you.

Hearing my spirit was like a super charged sauce, no, it was more like Popeye's spinach!

Watchman Nee observes:

Once we have learned to touch a man's spirit we know exactly what is his need. This secret of knowing a man is by sensing or touching his spirit ... As the spirit flows forth, it reveals the nature of the outward man, as to whether the latter has been broken or not, for our spirit takes its colour from the outward man as it flows forth.⁷⁵

Our spirit senses where another's spirit is up to and what is needed. Intuitively, we know if the "outer man" is broken or not. There is no joy in living a life too small for our spirit.

I am often inspired by the courage and growth of those I mentor. It encourages and frees me. "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:25). Where the spirit is, that's where the action is. When God's Spirit becomes intimate with our spirit, it results in a new birth. "Spirit can be known only by spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:14 MSG). Rather than speaking to mentees intellect I endeavour to speak life to their spirit.

One mentee was puzzled, "My spirit is taking off but my soul and body seem a long way back." We talked about how it's possible to go back, pick up the noise of the soul and the demands of the body, and bring them with you so the spirit is the integrating part of you. As the spirit comes to the surface, mentees discover (or re-discover – for somehow they already know) that the flesh can be overcome. What could God achieve in us if we gave Him more access to our spirits?

A PROCESS OF LISTENING TO GOD

Mal developed an engaging way to help a group hear their spirit and hear from God. I've integrated his approach into my mentoring. He would teach a unit at the end of Fusion's Foundations discipleship course called "Integration of the Spirit." I watched him, over many years, taking thousands of people on a journey of listening to their spirit and hearing from the Father. I wrote notes so I could recall what I had witnessed. Mal was happy for me to share the process that I observed.

As we got underway, Mal would share two truths: we each have a spirit breathed into us and that God never forces Himself onto us – we have to be willing to open the door.

A QUESTION OF BEING WILLING

Mal would enquire if they wanted to become more aware of how their spirit and the Holy Spirit work together. He would say, "God is always wanting to speak to us. It's a question for us if we are willing to tune into His voice."

He would ask:

**"Would you like to hear God's voice speaking to you?
Would you like to tune in and let your spirit come
into your awareness?"**

Sensing some may feel uncomfortable, he'd say, "I know this may sound unusual. I want to ask your spirit a question. It is simple. "If I could help you right now to hear your spirit, would you want to?"

Often, there would be murmurs around the room. He'd smile and say, "Well, it's hardly overwhelming!"

"Perhaps a part of you does. I wonder how willing you feel at this moment? Does it seem at times you may have a divided will?"

“Today we are talking to our will, not our mind. I wonder what it might be that would prevent you from hearing your spirit?”

“What is in your head doesn’t put you in touch with who you are. Perhaps there is a fog within. Yet, the more you want to hear your spirit, the more you can hear it.”

“I wonder if you want to hear what God loves in you?” Mal was warming them up, asking questions, taking them deeper. It was intentional, and spirit-led. Generally, most people were willing to go in and take the risk.

OUR SPIRIT’S DESIRE

Mal would then ask a question that I now regularly ask, particularly in the first few times I meet with a mentee:

“I wonder what your spirit yearns for, desires most in all the world?”

Aware that some may find this question challenging, he would speak to their concerns by saying, “As you are doing this, maybe there is a part of you that believes this is all a bit *silly*. Perhaps you can hear two parts to you: one a little abrasive and questioning; the other gentle, peaceful, hopeful. I believe that the second voice, the quieter one, is the core of you – the real you. The part of you that was there before all the bruises came. We are peeling off layers – like an onion. We want to get to the real you. The place where you are fully alive.

You can hear it in the tone of voice that speaks out. What does it want to say? There is no need to be stuck in your head trying to work it out. It doesn’t come from the head. See if you can trust this voice of your spirit.”

A silence would hang. In some cultures, I observed people were fast to respond, yet in other countries, there was an initial hesitancy to speak up. It never fazed Mal. He would wait, and, in

the silence, trust the process that people would speak when they were ready.

I was intrigued by the uniqueness of each response. Most would speak out one or two words, at most a sentence but it wasn't rushed. It was gentle, pure and yes, beautiful. Sometimes it came in hushed tones. Sometimes strong and confident.

Each response was acknowledged. People felt their contribution was respected, they felt seen. He would either repeat what they said or simply thank them for sharing it. Mal saw people. He knew they were doing as best they knew how.

WHAT DOES OUR SPIRIT WANT TO SAY TO GOD?

A series of questions would follow depending on how much time was available:

"What does your spirit, right now, want to say to God?"

At first there was normally silence. People were going in deep, listening. They spoke as they felt comfortable. He would just wait, observing and trusting the process unfolding.

Mal asked, "How does your spirit feel about God?" As they responded, I often observed a peace descending on the room. It was a sacred space. Mal would say, "Isn't it a relief to know you don't have to be "religious." All you need to do is to listen to this natural voice rising."

When he sensed it was time he would ask:

"What does God want to say to you?"

Again, he'd listen to a range of responses. He might ask other questions:

"What does God the Father think about you?" or perhaps, **"How does God the Father feel about you?"**

I was always fascinated by each unique response. I often use these questions in my mentoring.

Mal might at this point introduce us to a verse, "God made us free from the power of darkness. And He brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son that He loves so much. We now have our place amongst the children of light" (Colossians 1:13).

He would ask, "What rises for you as you hear this?"

There were times he would speak of the neurotic part within each of us, intruding into our relationships. He would describe it as lazy as it takes us away from hearing our spirit. He was highlighting the reality of the powers of darkness. He wanted everyone to know how possible it is to let them in and give them ground.

He would ask, "Let me just check something. Have you ever said yes to something you wish you had said no to?"

Are you ready to say no to what you said yes to?

Are you willing to invite God to close the door on what you said yes to?

If you give ground to the shadows, you may well be divided by them. The good thing about our faith is His death means that we are clean and free. 1 John 1:7 says, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.'

Jesus has done the work for us. What is it like to know this?

Jesus dying, said to us, *It is finished*. Forgiveness means the past is over.

How does that feel to know it's all over?"

Then this question, "What's it like to know that when your spirit speaks, you are coming from the core of who you are?"

These were all rhetorical questions. Mal was *reading the air* so he knew where to take them next.

When he would ask, "What does God the Father think about you?" It wasn't "What do you think about you?" He didn't want

them to come from their perspective. He was wanting them to take God's side—seeing themselves and the world from His view.

"Maybe," he said, "we all need to break a few patterns and welcome this part of us that we are listening to today ... and believe it!"

Around the room I observed people relaxing, appreciating it as they went deep.

He would refer to their spirit as being a travelling therapist within, an inner counsellor leading them into all truth.

He would ask, "Does your spirit expect you to be perfect all the time?"

He'd respond, "My guess is your spirit doesn't expect you to always get it right, but it does ask you to work on becoming complete."

FROM HERE ON ...

Mal, sensing it was time to *land the plane*, wanted to ensure the experience would not be a *one-off*. He wanted to challenge them so there were clear next steps for them. He asked:

"For life to be different from this point on, what do you know you have to do?"

"If you were to hear your spirit, where does it want to take you?"

"How often does this part of you want to be listened to?"

Often the responses would come, "100% of the time!"

Mal would continue:

"If you fall over, what does your spirit want you to do?"

People were sitting with their responses. Increasingly they knew if they wanted this true voice, it was available ... and willing.

I observed how the time together was never about how intelligent any person was or someone having to come up with *right* answers.

Mal was helping them to locate themselves, learning how to see past the noise within to a trusting, authentic voice. They were seeing themselves.

Watching the process unfold was fascinating. People being sensitively led to hear their spirit.

Mal would make some observations to encourage them on this journey to hear their spirit. “Your spirit knows you. If you want to know the truth it is there. While you may want to try to work out what is happening with your mind, all along our spirit is with us, travelling alongside. It’s about trust and control. You won’t hear your spirit if you want to be in control. The more you want God’s will, the more your spirit will speak. This is the real you speaking up. It is telling you the truth on the inside.”

Then he’d pray. Behind his words and his tone, I felt his love for God.

FEEDBACK

As we were concluding, Mal would ask:

“What, if anything, was helpful about what you have been through?”

He would say, “This is the fun bit. We get to hear each other.”

He’d listen as people shared highlights. Most spoke up. Their replies reflected the impact of what they had experienced.

Mal would remind them, this was their spirit—ready, available, willing, and able to speak up – if there was a safe place.

There were times they’d sit there. Some would ask, “What just happened?”

Eternity entering time.

I wanted more.

PART 4

**Mentoring
and Community**

THE POWER OF CONFESSION

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed

— James 5:16a

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us ...

— Hebrews 12:1b

There are, in many of us, wounds so deep that only the mediation of someone else to whom we may 'bare our grief' can heal us

— Agnes Sanford

REFLECTION ON COMMUNITY

We desperately need communion with others. Isolation never leads toward abundant living. Without people in our lives, our blind-spots remain dark to us and our deficits continue to eat away at our strength and hope. One of the essential starting points is to truly commune with those around us who are our traveling companions through life. Most of us are deceived into thinking that we live in community with those around us, simply because we exist in cities and sections of civilisation that require us to be surrounded by people. Yet the beauty of true community is that it allows us to approach our blind-spots with light and enter our deficits with healing power.

This act of communion with one another does not derail our individuality or unique journeys, but it allows us a greater access point to strength, empathy, clarity, and healing along the way. True community helps us to see ourselves in a way that points us to Christ, in whom we find fullness, not fragmentation. In seeking out authentic and deep communion with each other, we also give glory to God and create space for his kingdom to be built in our lives and on this earth.

Community, detached from Christ, can be a cluster of shallow social gatherings that do not honestly require much of us, and in turn, do not lead us to much. This shallow living is often governed by outer imitation of others, rather than the recognition of inner identity, and leads to a perpetual search for affirmation by the cluster.

We need more than clutter, confusion, and empty affirmations. We were not made merely to cluster, but to commune. Not to steal each other's warmth, but to give each other fire.

— JH

A mentee reflects on the power of confession:

Deep in my heart, there was always guilt and discomfort about my sexual struggles. When I first met Marty I'd been dating a lady for years. She was the person who helped me find God. Yet in the relationship I lost self-control and we regularly had sex. I felt guilt but I kept choosing to feed my flesh and fulfil its desire.

If I tried to say no, the flesh overcame me. "You can't win over this huge wave of desire in you. It's impossible, it's too big. You won't stop, don't miss the chance for pleasure, enjoy it as you want." So I did. Every time. Indulging. It swallowed my conscience. I told myself, "It's happening because I love her. I will probably marry her so reversing the order is no big deal."

I never shared this with anyone. It was too private and involved her privacy. There was also a fear of being judged and criticised. Besides, who could I completely trust to tell, to show my vulnerability? I may have believed in God yet I was a slave to my flesh.

I surprised myself that one day I felt comfortable enough to bring out what I'd pressed deep into my heart that had never been released. There was a trust, a bridge growing between Marty and me. I felt safe to be myself and I wanted at my core to live in freedom. I made a choice; I would tell him everything. So much guilt and shame flowed out.

Surprisingly, my heart felt lighter as we talked. I not only confessed this relationship to him, we went through a sexual healing process together where I invited Jesus into the deep places. I told Him my thoughts and feelings—apologising, listening to the Father, receiving His mercy and perfect forgiveness. We broke soul ties with all those I had had sex with; ex-girlfriends, one night stands, prostitutes. There was pornography as well.

THE POWER OF CONFESSION

As we went through all these conversations and processes together, I felt this strange sense of belonging, of coming home. God was providing a way to set me free. As I left my sexual sins I was overwhelmed by a deep knowing of my true sexuality and masculinity. Now I know I am a “spiritual virgin.” With my past I’d never imagined this could ever be possible. I felt such joy and gratitude to the Father.

I’d been behaving like a child. Now God was taking me to a totally different level. It didn’t mean temptations disappeared or my flesh kept quiet. But I learned to listen to my spirit that knows the will of God’s Spirit. My flesh may cry out yet I choose to not listen. I say, No, for I am no longer its slave. The flesh is a liar, empty, sneaky, seeking to steal my freedom by deception.

I choose to be accountable daily. It’s what my spirit truly wants – authentic community. God has healed and freed me. Within weeks, I began helping a friend to be liberated. I did for him what happened to me. It was that simple.

It’s been a year now. How different life is for me. I cannot even imagine what life would have been like if I hadn’t confessed. I would still be a slave of guilt and shame. I now have running mates, faith friends and spirit friends. Lost sheep have been entrusted to me. God is using my life. I feel Him everywhere.

My life is about creating a safe space for others where we share lives, be pure and vulnerable. I am living freedom and helping others into freedom. The curse is now a blessing. Best of all lust just can’t find any gap to sneak in. This is just the beginning.

OPENING UP

What do you do in the moment when your mentee says to you, *There is something I have never told anyone before?* It may not happen regularly, but if it does here is a process that's been invaluable for me.

A mentee had a sexual encounter with another guy at the age of twelve. He believed it was impossible to forgive himself. He withdrew from life, got low grades at school, avoided girls, and became anti-social. His parents were confused by his behaviour. He never felt he could tell anyone. Turning twenty, he was frustrated with the impact of his withdrawal from life. What happened at twelve was still controlling him. One evening, with all the courage he could muster, he chose to talk about it. He wept as his story unfolded. I listened until 3 am.

Inviting Jesus in, we broke this stronghold on his life. An act of confession healed and freed him. No longer bound by his past he tasted a new freedom. Speaking up, telling someone was a life-changing decision. He entered "life" again. At one level it may have felt like eight lost years. He would say he learnt deep lessons that keep resourcing him.

We all carry around pain, regrets, sadness. You don't have to scratch the surface for too long before you discover pain. I have found that it's rare for someone to go through adolescence without a skeleton or two in their closet. The act of confession is hard. It's a challenge to be vulnerable if shame and guilt are strangling our sense of self.

THE PROCESS OF CONFESSION

We know all too well the dangers of a secret existence. It takes energy to keep things concealed. Confession is transformational and breaks the circuit of a hidden life. C.S. Lewis writes, "Most of us have never really faced the facts about ourselves until we uttered them aloud in plain words, calling a spade a spade."⁷⁶ Confession

gives us an opportunity to bring light into our lives. Telling God, myself, then others the truth, frees my heart.

When levels of trust deepen in a mentoring relationship, mentees increasingly feel free to be vulnerable. The question before them is, “Can I trust my mentor with something I have not shared previously?” Intuitively they know if it’s safe to trust. I could let them know that everything is safe with me, yet they are just words and it may not feel that way for them.

Your humble, joyful and trusting honesty disarmed me. I entered the conversation with walls up but by the end I was able to tell you everything. I knew I wouldn’t be judged – that’s been incredibly freeing.

When I hear a mentee say, *I’ve never told this to anyone before*, that’s the cue to prepare myself. My job is to listen and pray. How do they reach this place where they are ready to talk? Some mentees have opened up after I’ve shared parts of my story with them. I recall having a meal with a young guy at a conference. He asked me about my life. As I spoke, I was caught by surprise with my tears that came as I talked. That was all he needed to believe that I was someone he could trust. He asked if we could talk again. Later that night he shared a secret life he’d never believed he would reveal to anyone.

There are other times, when I sense it’s a right moment to ask, “I wonder if there is anything that you want to tell me that you could be free of?” As they’ve already asked me to mentor them, I feel I can sensitively explore any past issues with them. It is an invitation. I don’t presume they have to, or need to, tell me anything.

You helped create a space where I could tell you something I had never told anyone. Once I felt safe you asked me the question about the flesh that no one had ever asked me. For years I had wanted to not be alone with that question.

There seemed no way I could talk about it. There was shame. I'd been in isolation for a long time. With your question instantly a bridge was there to talk about it. I didn't realise how much hurt was there. I didn't even know I needed healing. I can see I needed someone who could create space and invite me in.

It's a courageous act when someone allows me in. They may be nervous, even frightened. I seek to be reassuring, reminding them what they tell me is confidential. I let them know that I have a lousy memory!

The moment comes, the air is thick. A choice is made. Vulnerability before breakthrough. The risk, the cost, the facing of the weight of sin. It's hard. Some sob, weep (at times uncontrollably) with pain and sadness. An addiction to porn, a sexual encounter they deeply regret ... a loss of innocence.

Some sit with a long silence before they can speak. If the tears come they're unsure if it's pain or relief or both. I try not to cry – sometimes though I am so moved by their courage and their story that tears flow. Yet I try to remain as separate as possible. I don't want to come across *nurturing* or *rescuing* them in any way.

The die is cast. The infected boil is pierced. The pus comes out. There is no other way. The process can't be rushed. It takes as long as it takes. I want to have sensitivity to where each person is and give them the space they need.

Some are prepared and may have notes to remind them of what they want to get out. Most times though it's a flow straight from the heart. Together with God they are doing the work. I watch in silence. I keep strong eye contact. All the while I'm praying, inviting the Holy Spirit to do a deep work.

I work at holding back any judgement to what they've confessed. I want to be a bearer of grace. I can only imagine the negative impact of me saying to them, "You did what?" I'm committed

to supporting them on this freedom journey. I try to live out mercy (getting inside their skin), empathy, patience, and love.

They are on their own journey of discovery—it's no longer theory. I check if there is anything else they want to tell me. I remind them that freedom is coming. It is holy.

Confession clears the air. Once everything is in the light, I may read sections of Psalm 51. David's deep remorse and repentance helps them see a way forward. I check on how they are feeling and ask if they're ready to pray. They need time to deal with anything they want to. Once they sense all is dealt with, I often encourage them to kneel as they pray. I am always moved by how they pray.

After their prayer I find it helpful to play a *priestly* role with a prayer of absolution reinforcing they are forgiven. The past is over. There is nothing they need to go back to. I pray 1 John 1:9 over them, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

I speak these truths:

By His wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed
our transgressions from us. (Psalms 103:12)

Sometimes I recount the story of Joshua in Zechariah:

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood
before the angel. The angel said to those who were
standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then
he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and
I will put fine garments on you." (*Zechariah* 3:4-5)

I invite them to find, if it's possible, a white t-shirt to put on to symbolise what has taken place. Once this part of the process is complete, I'll ask how they feel. Mostly, the first response is deep relief. They've told someone something they never thought they

could. Often it is followed by sheer joy, at times laughter. From my side there may be a hug celebrating their new freedom. I thank them for their courage in opening up their story to me.

I often share these two verses:

At last we have freedom, for Christ has set us free! We must always cherish this truth and firmly refuse to go back into the bondage of our past. (Galatians 5:1 TPT)

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

I encourage them to read Psalm 51 a few times. I enjoy the Message translation where David describes his new life, “Soak me in your laundry and I’ll come out clean, scrub me and I’ll have a snow-white life. Tune me in to foot-tapping songs, set these once-broken bones to dancing” (Psalms 51:7-8 MSG). We mark this leaving of their old life and entering the new.

King David writes, “What bliss belongs to those who have confessed their corruption to God! For he wipes their slates clean and removes hypocrisy from their hearts” (Psalms 32:1-2 TPT). The relief can be indescribable. Some report this moment of confession is when they became a man, finally, free from a past that’s too often defined them.

I dropped all my baggage. I felt like a feather, O so much lighter. In that moment I knew who I truly was. I was my true self. I was free.

After confession I felt like I had a new room. I am no longer a boy. I am a man. This is really me. I am stepping into a responsible version of myself – the man I have wanted to become.

We speak of how accountability could now work for them. They may feel exposed so this is the time to support them. From this point, often mentees *opt in* to mentoring at a deeper, more intentional level. To continue leaving any sexual sin behind, I encourage them to pray through Eldredge's *Prayer for Sexual Healing*.⁷⁷ Confession is life-changing. With an increasingly free and engaged spirit, surprises are in store.

I know what sin feels like. I know what living in the light is like. So, I chose to tell you everything so I could be free. In fact, I wish I could say to everyone, 'Just say it. It will free you and break chains. You find freedom. It's a different way of living.'

I continue to be fascinated by James' words, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Most of the men who approach me to talk over these issues have already asked for forgiveness (some over a hundred times!) yet this moment of confessing is where healing is experienced and truly felt. It's grace and it is really amazing.

I decided to share my fall with you because my secret had become a sting inside of me. It prevented me from having authentic times with God. I was heart-broken. Ashamed, deeply regretting what I'd done. I knew I had to let the sting go. As I was speaking with you it went via my heart up through my mouth as I told you.

I recall your face – it reflected the emotion of Jesus. After I told you I felt a freedom I'd never experienced before. I remember after a while just laughing. I was so free.

I've been thinking about what happened after we talked. My heart was burning. I was so happy when you said, 'I

want to support you.’ All day I was crying at work, tears of joy. I think I can run hundreds of miles now!

Once the words left my body it was like there was fresh air. The little boy inside of me was walking in confidence, he knew who his Father was. Now I am trying to pour out my life for others.

I thought this was all a dark part of my past that I couldn’t forgive myself for. I have given my past feelings and experiences too much power.

Confession comes with no guarantees. Some are totally able to leave their past and show breath-taking progress. For most, it’s a slower process – a process of daily accountability. It all begins with one win against temptation through a willing spirit resourcing you each moment. God is in the repairing business, but it’s not always a one-off fix. If they’re confessing an addiction to porn there’s no “one size fits all” strategy to overcome. To take on the monster of porn, a Goliath in their life, means strong foundations and strategies are required to prepare for battle.

Eldredge writes:

There is no “zap” that suddenly makes a person as whole and beautiful as Jesus Christ. Wholeness is something we grow into as we walk with Jesus through the years of our lives. Knowing this actually takes a great deal of pressure off – that pressure to find the instant fix or have the One Defining Moment. It releases us to walk with God and allow him to personalise our healing journey.⁷⁸

Confession is, as John White says, “High risk, big pay-off.” No guarantees, yet the pay-off is life-changing. To watch this process unfold is a deep privilege.

THE POWER OF TELLING SOMEONE

I sense the reason I am given opportunities to mentor men and help them with this process of confession, is because I spoke up and told someone what happened in my life. This once act totally transformed me.

As a four-year-old boy, I have no recollection of how I ended up in the laundry of a fifteen-year-old neighbour, but I know this; he sexually abused me. That day changed my life forever. A line in the film "Retaliation" captured its impact, "I was 12 when I was abused. When I woke up the next day, I was 100." The experience was seared into my brain. Left on my own, bewildered, guilty, shamed, and confused. There was little within me that could make sense of what happened.

I couldn't imagine telling anyone, so I internalised it, hiding it deep within. I concluded that something must be wrong with me. I was flawed. I blamed myself. The way I processed it, and why I didn't share it with anyone, was I was convincing myself that if I didn't think about it or talk about it, it didn't happen. It would just go away.

I heard people say that whatever a person can't talk about already controls them. That is how it felt. There was an increasing level of frustration by the energy needed to keep this secret within. I began looking for the right person, the right moment to speak out.

A friend came to visit me. After all these years I knew it was time to tell someone, I took a deep breath, counted to three and jumped.

It is no exaggeration to say this one act changed my life. There was a time years earlier when I had accepted Jesus into my heart but this evening I truly felt born again. What a relief to no longer need to put energy into hiding. It brought life, understanding, and freedom. I was twenty-four. The secret, locked inside for twenty years, was freed.

What happened to me as a little boy was now not the most important thing about me. No longer was my past going to define me. I went from living in black and white to colour. Without any doubt I can say it was the most courageous thing I've done. *Truth-telling* set me on the path to healing. I am doing what I am today because I chose to bring all of my past into the light.

This was now my journey to take. There was dignity in facing it. I thought the healing was just for me. Initially it was. Now I am entrusted with sacred moments like those described in this chapter, privileged to play a small role in helping mentees to be free.

I once read the following story. It became a reference point to describe the freedom that comes from confession. I share it with mentees, inviting them to let it speak to them. I rarely ask questions when I invite them to read it, for the power of the story speaks. If you can, give yourself a moment after you read to reflect on it. See what it says to you:

THE SKELETON STORY

A friend of mine lives in a house which once had a secret room. While the rest of the house was bright and cheery, this room was dark and hidden. The doors of the other rooms were open, except maybe in winter. The door of this room was firmly shut. Just occasionally my friend would turn the doorknob, push it open and have a quick look. Then, just as quickly, he'd slam the door again ... for the thing he was afraid of was still in there.

Whenever he had people in the house, he would feel very anxious about this secret room. He had to cover up in all sorts of ways so no-one found out about it. After some years that shut door began to annoy him. He wanted to be able to feel free in his own home. He wanted to ask people to stay and needed the space.

One day, he summoned all the courage he had and decided to ask a good friend to help. Asking for help wasn't easy for he had to actually tell his friend what was in the room. How would you feel if you had to tell another person that you had something hidden in your house that you had never told anyone about?

His friend, however, didn't seem to be upset at all. Together they went into my friend's house and approached the door of the room. They pushed on the door. It opened. Inside, cobwebs hung from the ceiling, dust was everywhere and there was the smell of mould. They made their way to a big cupboard in the corner.

As they approached my friend wanted to run away, out of the room. His friend came alongside him, gave his hand a reassuring squeeze and together they looked through the glass front of the cupboard to what was there. His courage rose.

With his heart beating rapidly he put his hand into the cupboard to remove the horrible skeleton hanging there. As soon as he touched it, it collapsed into a heap, spilling bones out of the cupboard and onto the floor. My friend got such a shock – so much so that he laughed. You know how you laugh sometimes with relief when you have faced the worst? His friend laughed too – and together they picked up the bones and placed them in a cardboard box.

They decided the best thing to do was to bury the bones in the garden, and because he didn't want to forget them altogether, they planted a rosebush on top of the grave. The room was a secret no longer. They cleaned it, bought new curtains and painted the room in fresh colours.

A WILLING SPIRIT

Sometimes, when someone rather special comes to stay he will tell the story of the room and he will feel glad, again, that he had the courage to do something about it.⁷⁹

FIGHTING THE FLESH

You use steel to sharpen steel, and one friend sharpens another

— Proverbs 27:17 MSG

Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society

— St Francis of Assisi

Know the enemy

— Sun Tzu

Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God

— 2 Corinthians 7:1

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires

— Romans 13:14

THE VOICE INSIDE MY HEAD SAYS, "I WANT TO DIE."

FLESH! You may want me to fall
face-first into this river. You may want me
to carve a suit of slits down my body.
You may want me to swallow everything
in my house 'til I distend—but you know what?
I'm going to do what you asked!
I'm going to give you what you want!
You want to die?
I ironed my black slacks,
even pressed my skinny black tie.
There's gonna be a funeral, Flesh!
And you're not invited!
You're not invited
because the funeral
is for you.

— *Michael Frazier*

A mentee writes about the role of a small group of friends in his battle with the flesh.

A year ago, I wasn't in the best place. On a regular basis, I would give in to watching porn. I kept thinking maybe I won't ever be able to break free. Do I really want to keep trying to fight it?

I realised I needed a mentor, someone to give me a hand. Honestly though, I didn't want to make the effort. I saw Marty talking with others so I decided at least I would connect with him. When we met I was conscious of holding back. I just didn't know where it would go. He listened and affirmed the calling he saw on my life. As we walked along the river, he shared a little of his story. It was transparent and real. I felt his genuine love for me.

We met again. This time was different. As we began talking I knew I had to tell him. "Hey there's something I need to say." Almost immediately, I could feel his energy change as he visibly listened. What unfolded was a "man to man" discussion. I shared my story openly. I wasn't aware of my spirit at that time but I knew something inside of me was jumping for joy. I'm glad I said yes to inviting him in.

We began mentoring. He helped me get focused. I wanted to grow yet it's hard with an addiction for over 14 years. I knew if I didn't have a team fighting alongside me, I didn't have a chance of making it. Another friend was also beginning to journey with Marty. I could see the transformation that was taking place in his life. The growth in him inspired me to fight more intentionally for my freedom.

Marty challenged me to be part of a group where I could be accountable. I knew it would help me, so I joined. With them I now share daily reports and we pray for one another through using our group chat. I'm sharing the reality of my struggles. I text them when temptations are strong.

When we meet it's always raw. I'm inspired by what they share. They're wholehearted and committed. It helps me to live like that. We celebrate our wins. I've had a few lately. It feels good, I'm growing. Yet I know I'm still recovering. When a fall happens, I tell my "band of brothers." It's hard, but I know this accountability is right for me. I'm not judged by them. I know I need to let know what is truly going on.

The fact they have my back empowers me. I'm no longer fighting alone. I texted them. "Thanks for being on my team I have never experienced a fellowship like this before."

Other times I text, "I am not going to give in. I'm not that old guy anymore. I will not go back! Battle in prayer with me guys, I can feel the flesh is fighting for grip of me..."

I know this, without my brothers I don't stand a fighting chance. Their support gives me hope. A life from porn feels possible.

As I keep wrestling God takes me by surprise. A younger guy has asked me to mentor him. He's currently where I've been.

FLESH AND LUST

I am acutely aware of the power of the flesh. A commitment to fighting it over many years has been the most effective, most active preparation for me to be able to come alongside those I mentor. The flesh thwarts us from being who we're called to be. You have to do the work to know your own flesh. Conquer and kill it. There is no other way.

Mal would speak of the flesh as that part of you that wants to "maximise pleasure and minimise pain." Eldredge in *Wild at Heart* refers to it as "the traitor within":

The old man or the sinful nature is that part of fallen Adam in every man that always wants the easy way out

... To put it bluntly, the flesh is a weasel, a poser, a selfish pig. Here is the good news ... your flesh is not you. It is not the real you ... the real you is on the side of God against the false self. Your flesh is your false self ...⁸⁰

Paul devotes chapter 7 in Romans to describing the flesh and its power. The flesh walks the path of least resistance. Paul writes, "I know that in me (my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18). I understand the flesh more when I compare it to life in the Spirit. Paul contrasts the flesh with the Spirit in Galatians 5:19-23. The difference is stark. This section concludes with, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

You simply can't ignore the flesh. Once stirred up, it can be insatiable. It whines for recognition. It can justify (almost) anything as it seeks to find a way for the madness within to take over.

What is lust? It can be a noun or verb with both relating to a strong sexual desire. According to Baker's Biblical Dictionary, lust is "a strong craving or desire, often of a sexual nature. It is used twenty-nine times in Scripture – never once is it even remotely referred to as something positive." The Urban Dictionary has more colourful ways to describe it:

It is purely physical attraction – this feeling in your gut that makes you do wild things and this unending thought in your head. A large physical attraction for an individual, that is sometimes uncontrollable and completely unreasonable.

But we don't need a dictionary to know what lust is. It's a man's everyday battle to face. A graphic description of lust is from Frederick Buechner:

Lust is the ape that gibbers in our loins. Tame him as we will by day, he rages all the wilder in our dreams by night. Just when we think we're safe from him, he

raises up his ugly head and smirks, and there's no river
in the world flowing cold and strong enough to strike
him down. Almighty God, why dost thou deck men
out with such a loathsome toy?⁸¹

The strength of feelings and emotions, particularly around our sexuality, can attack our heart, dividing and isolating us. As Buechner says, "It gibbers in our loins." It's slippery, challenging to control, and difficult to suppress. Guilt and shame often accompany these feelings.

The challenge with the flesh is it can seem so appealing. It cries out to be indulged. Yet once given into, it leads to sadness and disappointment and as Proverbs says, "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12)

Our sexuality is a striking example of the strong interaction between body, soul and spirit. It's this desire to connect and belong – to create and transcend. Our sexual energy, as Ronald Rolheiser writes, "Is the most powerful of all fires, the best of all fires and the most dangerous of all fires."⁸²

PORNOGRAPHY

A mentee wrote to me:

I'm convinced porn is the absolute biggest issue for guys. I want to encourage you as you are mentoring, addressing porn and encouraging them to run from it, is the best thing you can do. So many guys are living anaesthetised by it and not experiencing God in His fullness because they're clouded and numb. I know it too well. The most profound thing I have ever done is set porn aside and vowed, with God's help and grace, to walk away from it forever. It was the fight of my life.

For many guys, porn needs to be the first domino to fall, the first step into freedom, but it has to be done wholeheartedly. Not always perfectly, but wholeheartedly.

I hate porn. It incapacitates men, holding them back from truly becoming who they were made to be. It gives the devil ground. The proliferation of porn is the number one issue that comes up in my mentoring. I meet few guys who haven't struggled with this issue when we first begin. We have to treat porn/lust like poison and be ruthless about fleeing from it.

There's a plethora of helpful books, articles and websites available. I'm simply skating around the edges. Eldredge speaking at the Wild at Heart Boot Camp I attended said:

Watching porn isn't about sex. It's about your own validation. It lets you feel like a man for a moment. It's medicating the wound that is within you. You are using (porn, masturbation, sexual encounters) to try to feel better. The issue is the wound, not the medicating. God wants you to know that whatever the wound is He can heal it. You were meant to be loved by a Father. It starts with the lie that I am lonely. I want to be comforted and this is the way I have to do it.

A wound not addressed is a wound that can't be healed. Some men, from their own trauma and wounding, embrace porn and it becomes part of their identity, as much as they want to deny this.⁸³

Porn is the easiest "go to" to medicate wounds. I try to help mentees explore where these wounds may have come from. Some are clear and are quickly exposed. Others need space to explore and understand what's happening. Sometimes I can help them, other times I encourage them to get professional help.

One man, now in his thirties, who I began mentoring when he was 17, reminded me how I helped him give up porn. He recalled me drawing a line in the sand and inviting him to cross over, to leave it, to live differently.

That day I knew you had my best interest in mind. You heard the truest part of me that wanted to grow. I chose to cross over. I often go back to that moment. I needed you, a mentor and friend willing to take me on. You patiently guided me through this crisis in my life. Giving up porn and the support you gave me helped shape my character.

MASTURBATION

Dealing with the flesh demands we face everything. Paul writes, “Each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable” (1 Thessalonians 4:4).

I’m asked frequently if masturbation is sin, I can’t be prescriptive, the Bible isn’t. I can be sure of this...if masturbation is accompanying your watching of porn, then it’s very clear it’s not part of God’s plan. So too, any impure thought life. Jesus is particularly direct here. There is no compromise, “... anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

Most mentees, not all, let me know that for them masturbation is not helpful for them. At the very least it complicates life. Those struggling with what’s become an addiction, tell me that the accompanying shame and guilt make it challenging to stay close to the Father.

I will often ask what their spirit wants to say to them. Interestingly I can’t recall hearing anyone’s spirit encouraging them to masturbate.

I am not pushy about this but at a certain point I will often challenge guys to have a go at giving up and experiencing what is

different. I haven't heard anyone tell me they feel less free after giving up.

I was surprised with C.S. Lewis' directness:

The real evil of masturbation would be that it takes an appetite which, in lawful use, leads the individual out of himself to complete (and correct) his own personality in that of another ... and turns it back: sends the man back into the prison of himself, there to keep a harem of imaginary brides ... After all, almost the main work of life is to come out of ourselves, out of the little, dark prison we are all born in. Masturbation is to be avoided as all things are to be avoided which retard this process. The danger is that of coming to love the prison.⁸⁴

My view is masturbation is self-medicating – offering relief in the short term but avoiding real issues within. Particularly it's challenging when there's any degree of addiction attached to it. It is hardly something that a free spirit wants to be part of.

When mentees ask me whether masturbation is wrong, I suggest they ask their spirit. If they want to hear it, they will know what they have to do.

Here's some responses from mentees:

Masturbation cuts away at me, takes away my confidence and I become inward and introspective. It rips away at my masculinity, takes pieces of my core. I'm simply focusing on myself and my needs. The strong man within me is torn away. I watch myself lose confidence to invite a girl out.

When I experience the urge to masturbate, I have come to see it is the flesh just waiting for me, ready to pounce, ready to get me in. What a contrast to my spirit, waiting for me, wanting to speak life.

I found comfort in the prison, without knowing it was in fact, a prison. I would think about masturbation well, 'it's not even porn, it's not hurting anyone. I see how it has held me back from the 'big things' I wanted in my life. I learnt that when the initial thought or temptation hits, I'd acknowledge it, look it in the eye and say "Sorry, I'm not going into the prison. Not today.

I was feeding my flesh for short-term pleasure. One day an unforgettable truth overwhelmed me. My spirit disturbed me, telling me I was just using women in porn and masturbating for my selfish purpose. I wasn't aligning in any way with my spirit, I wasn't living in truth. In that moment a strong power took me over – an energy that had been previously discharging and draining me as I watched porn and masturbated. It was huge. I thought what if I could use this energy to become a strong man, to purely focus on my wife only, like a laser beam. This truth revealed who I was as a man. I knew I was designed to love a woman truly. Daily now I am choosing to be that man.

I am conscious this is simply an opening, a “toe dipped in the ocean” exploration of porn and masturbation. I find it interesting that there is a NoFap website that serves as a support group for those (atheists not Christians) wanting to give up pornography and masturbation. Hundreds of thousands of its members believe pornography and masturbation are unhealthy. They have one overwhelming goal to stop it totally.

RECOVERING

I'm committed to helping mentees face lies from the evil one and agreements made when it comes to porn, masturbation and sexual encounters. Here are some examples of agreements that mentees have broken:

FIGHTING THE FLESH

*It's not that bad to do it, it's only this one time.
You'll never be strong enough.
You could never give up masturbating.
Porn is too much a part of me now.
If you don't do it today you will do it tomorrow.
You're not good enough.
This is the area you will lose.
It will feel good, you can escape.
Having sex at any time is what men do.
Unless you have sex, how will you know what it is like?*

Some men I mentor say to me “I had a failure” when it comes to giving in to the flesh. I prefer to use the word fall. Some want to apologise to me for what they have done. I’m quick to encourage them to have it out with God.

Why I find it helpful to distinguish between fail and fall is that when you fail, you often don’t know what to do and feel powerless; but when you fall you know that you need to get back up.

We talk over what they have learnt from their fall and what will be different next time. We review what the triggers may have been, and particularly, in the area of lust, what they could do alternatively. How best to hear and respond to their spirit.

Dr Jeanne Williams, a Canadian child psychologist & play therapist, has a saying, “It’s not what you do, it’s what you do after what you did.” What we do after what we get wrong either amplifies the problems, or transforms what happened into redemptive and strengthening moments.

C.S. Lewis again:

No amount of falls will really undo us if we keep picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out, and the clean clothes are in the airing cupboard.

The only fatal thing is to lose one's temper and give it up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present in us; it is the very sign of His presence.⁸⁵

I want to bring the love of the Father so I remind them of how God watches on, desiring to *father* us (the towels are ready!) He wants to welcome us *home*. It's the way God meant it to be. It's over. There is a new start. It's called grace.

I suggest they journal the process of what they have been through. What have they learnt? What is the Father saying to them now? Others are more verbal processors and do it in mentoring times or with their running mate.

THE ROLE OF OUR SPIRIT

An alive spirit gives you energy to take on the flesh. I am at my best in fighting the flesh when my spirit is engaged. I am more readily available to resist temptations. In fact I can observe what my flesh is trying to do. The more dying that happens, the freer your spirit. A growing authority builds within you as you take on the flesh. Your spirit works alongside you, inviting you to join the battle. It is more willing than you can imagine.

I recall walking through the streets of Sydney. I *spied* a sex shop. Tempted, I thought I'll just go in there—no one will know. From deep within a voice shouted, *No!* and I ran. Startled onlookers wondered what was going on. I am grateful I was open to my spirit fuelling me. My flesh wanted feeding; my spirit wanted to run. I often refer to it as *Joseph running* (see Genesis 39:12).

Bring a willing spirit to the battle. You will be surprised by how it can help you be more creative in the fight. Yet there are no guarantees. Sadly, it is too easy to leave God and our spirit in a separate room when lust sneaks in. Give in to the flesh and you deaden your spirit. Listen and choose the voice of your spirit and your choices are empowered.

David cries out, “I know that You delight to set your truth deep in my spirit. So come into the hidden places of my heart and teach me wisdom. Purify my conscience! Make this leper clean again! Wash me in your love until I am pure in heart” (Psalms 51:6-7 TPT). When our spirit returns there’s joy and restoration. “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalms 51:12).

MOVING FORWARD WITH OTHERS

The reality is that it’s challenging to take on and die to the flesh by yourself. We need others fighting alongside us. Here’s one way a mentee reacted to his fall:

I wish I had good news, but I watched porn the other day. It sucked a lot, but I had an incredible and vulnerable conversation with the other guys in a leadership role in our college dorm. We all downloaded an app called “Victory” and have committed 200 days as a challenge for us as a staff. I messed up but I’m excited for what God is doing in us as a brotherhood here on campus through this commitment to Him and to one another.

The writer of Proverbs says, “For though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again” (Proverbs 24:16).

For some, 200 days is a goal that excites, for others it can feel oppressive, unobtainable. I talk with each mentee about what is a helpful goal for them. My desire is they take on a plan to inspire, not oppress.

I am grateful for my running mate who knows my world. In choosing to disclose to him and my mentor, humbly and honestly I have won over the flesh. “My innermost circle will only be those whom I know are pure and godly. They will be the only ones I allow to minister to me.” (Psalms 101:3-4, 6 TPT)

Having someone alongside you can be a game-changer. You are no longer alone. There's a person in your corner fighting shoulder to shoulder. "Whatever else you do, you must have a small fellowship to walk with you and fight with you and bandage your wounds. This is essential," says Eldredge.⁸⁶

One mentee told me that in his support group someone said to the others, *You can suffer alone and give yourself to the flesh, but if you want me to fight alongside you then call me, even if it is 3 am!*

Accountability in my life has led to a greater freedom. I know first-hand the difference it makes. It's why I encourage mentees to be as regular and specific in their reporting. Some find daily text updates helpful. Come up with something together that will help you win over the flesh.

My guess is there will be times when you may be tempted to think, do I really need to tell them everything? Noah Filippiak writes:

No matter how much freedom you experience in your sexual purity, Satan will never stop attacking you with temptation. When one type of temptation doesn't work anymore, he just morphs and shifts to another. With the greatest temptation of all being that you no longer need to share your temptations and struggles with others. When you think you're strong enough to defeat temptation on your own, Satan has you right where he wants you.⁸⁷

Gather your friends together with a crystal-clear goal and commitment. Develop a "band of brothers" culture amongst you. You will empower each other as you take one another on. It will lead to freedom.

PEERS SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER

Running mates speak directly to each other. Being real with each other means we learn and grow together. A mentee shared what a guy in his support group had sent to him:

Brothers I got to confess to you guys I slipped up about 3 nights ago for the first time since being married and looked at some porn. God convicted me to tell my wife. Man it's broken her. She's deeply hurt and been in fits of tears. I want to let you know the deep hurt this sin can cause to those that most love us. I don't want you to experience the same.

One mentee wrote directly to his accountability partner after he had told him he'd fallen to porn:

You mentioned when you gave in there wasn't even a fight. I just want to call you out on that, man. That's not you. That isn't even close to the man I know. There's a strength in you that you're not tapping into enough – a fighter who doesn't fully realise the strength in his punches. You are much stronger than your enemy, but you're allowing the enemy to get you on the ropes.

There is always a way out of temptation that is given in these moments and it teaches you how to fight. The moment may be brief, but it's always there. The Father is too kind not to offer one. Jamming worship music the moment a thought comes has been a life saver for me. I may do push-ups or throw on my running shoes and hit the trail. Whatever it takes! I got into running because of the temptations. It gets easier as your will gets stronger, I promise.

One brother took on his friend after he went on a porn binge:

I wonder how willing you are to 'man-up' to what is happening. We can't make you tell us but I know that if you are truly committed and serious to grow you won't care what you tell us. You will simply be desperate to live in the light. You'll text us when you are being tempted. Cut the general responses, brother. That's what your flesh wants. It keeps you separate from us. This battle is real. For your freedom you need 100%.

None of this can be legalistic – something they *should* do. It has to be wholehearted otherwise it can become a ritual. Eldredge has something extremely helpful to say about this:

We don't need accountability groups; we need fellow warriors, someone to fight alongside, someone to watch our back ... We don't need a meeting of Really Nice Guys, we need a gathering of Really Dangerous Men. That's what we need ... We need men to whom we can bear our souls ... We need a band of brothers, willing to shed their blood with us.⁸⁸

I encourage you to move to the offensive – to build a support team around you of fellow warriors. Develop your group of *Really Dangerous Men*. Do life together as friends in community, rooted and grounded in an experience of the love of God as our Father.

It's the fight of our lives. We need each other. It's what we were made for.

Appendix 4 contains practical resources and challenges to help you fight together. There's also a 55-day challenge for ladies included.

THE IMPACT OF GATHERING TOGETHER

Jesus did not write a book but formed a community

— Lesslie Newbigin

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship
with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from
all sin*

— 1 John 1:7

*Don't commit yourself to community, but commit yourself to God ...
In that commitment you will find yourself drawn into community*

— Parker Palmer

RULE FOR A NEW BROTHER – MEMBERS OF ONE BODY

The community is the first place
where you will make God's kingdom incarnate.
Accept with gratitude the brothers God gives you to go with you
on the way.
Your task is to serve and upbuild one another as members
of one body.

To the extent that you are filled with His Spirit
and ready to die that others may live,
And to that extent will you grow in unity
and reflect the face of Christ more and more clearly.

And to the extent that you are ready to die together that
others may live
will your community bear fruit for the coming of the Kingdom.

Then put aside all ambition,
and no longer concentrate on yourself ...
Give instead of demanding,
trust others instead of compelling their trust, serve instead of
being served,
bless instead of cursing.

And you, accept from your brother the help you need.

Your faith and love must be constantly renewed;
your weakness and faults constantly corrected.
Don't be afraid to open yourself to your brothers.
Choose from among them a sure and skilful guide
who will help you advance in the way of the Lord.⁸⁹

A mentee reflects on the power of being part of a small group of friends:

Prior to getting married, I had a Buck's Party (Bachelor's Party). My brother-in-law came with us. He was the only one invited who was not part of "the group.". He's a bit older, and not, to my knowledge, a believer. At one point the guys stopped just hanging around to sit and talk about me, about my strengths and my flaws, about what they were excited for about my growth into marriage and what I needed to work on to do well as a husband. My brother-in-law was sitting quietly the whole way through.

*I was very apprehensive, to be honest, thinking what was this guy going to think about how direct and intense we can be about each other's lives. As I drove home with him, he just started talking about how sad it made him that he didn't have what we have. I asked him what he meant and he said "You just have these mates who actually give a s*** about you and your future. When you guys talked, you always wanted to go deeper and right to the jugular with tough questions. I don't get why you trust them to do that to you, but I can see it does something."*

When he said it, it seemed so obvious; these guys had committed to me to go deep, to walk alongside my spirit and fight (even with me) to draw out the best of me. When I got married, I wanted these guys right up there, standing next to me, with me. I got in a lot of trouble for that with my family, for not having my brothers with me as groomsmen. My family couldn't understand – "friends come and go, why would you choose these guys over your brothers?"

Although I love my brothers, they haven't seen me at my most broken, they haven't heard my spirit soar, and they haven't bared their own souls to me, to show me I wasn't the only one trying to figure it out. They never committed to me voluntarily that they were going to be my brothers. These guys had.

It's an unfettered, in-your-face, bare-knuckles love that hurts and heals at the same time. I think the best way to sum up why we stay together is the words of Gordon Cosby, "I'm seized by the power of a great affection."

OUR ORIGINAL DESIGN

Without the Fall, life would have been so different. Edith Humphreys describes it like this, "Adam and Eve walked with God. Then fallen humanity, its spirit wounded, lost that ease of communion."⁹⁰ In Genesis 2 we see this ease of relating, "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). They were unafraid.

My friend Liz writes:

We were made for deep, authentic community. Designed to commune, actively, relationally with others – reflecting our Father's image. The triune God is fully relational and He passed that quality on to us when He breathed life into our dusty lungs. We commune because it is part of our identity as His image-bearers. From the beginning God made it clear, "It's not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). It never has been good. Never will be ...⁹¹

We need each other. It's in our DNA. Community, with Christ leading the way, is what I'm seeking. It's what I need. It brings healing into lives. When we are in community, it's possible to recognise God in each other. I aim to create community wherever I am—a community where people truly know each other and are known.

I believe in the power of finding others to meet up with regularly, inviting and allowing the Father to do His work in our hearts and lives. In community we experience how, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). It's here where a friend is, "closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

The Message translates it as, “Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family.”

We gather together and His power flows through us. We’re more supported and more protected (from sin and from opposition), than anyone trying to survive on their own. C.S. Lewis describes friendship as:

The greatest of worldly goods. Certainly, to me, it is the chief happiness of life. If I had to give a piece of advice to a young man about a place to live, I think I should say, ‘sacrifice almost everything to live where you can be near your friends.’⁹²

SMALL GROUPS IN SCRIPTURE

Reflect on how often in Scripture we see community expressed through small groups.

Daniel and his three friends were not willing to compromise in any way. Choosing together to live a life of purity, living life together (including a fiery furnace for three of them.) They gave themselves to God and to each other.

David and Jonathan committed themselves to a covenant relationship. Willing to help in their darkest moments, willing to give their lives for the other.

A favourite story of mine is Jonathan and his armour bearer together taking on the Philistine army. The armour bearer tells Jonathan, “Do all that you have in mind ... Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul” (1 Samuel 14:7).

Jesus built a strong community around Him. “John, the disciple whom Jesus loved,” was free to “lie close to the breast of Jesus” (John 13:23 RSV). Jesus had his three closest friends, Peter, James, and John, with him at significant moments in his life. He had twelve disciples, and sent out seventy-two, two by two.

Jesus illustrates how He is uniquely present when we gather together. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20).

Chapter two and four in the Book of Acts highlights the strong community in the life of the early Church. We see Paul taking Barnabas, then Silas, on his mission trips. There’s also the beauty of the longer term father/son relationship between Paul and Timothy. It all models how we need to live.

A SAFE PLACE FOR WEARY PILGRIMS

Crabb writes:

If it is unsafe it isn’t community ... A central task of community is to create a place that is safe enough for the walls to be broken down – safe enough for each of us to own and reveal our brokenness ... [We] yearn for a safe community of friends hungry for God who know what it means to sense the Spirit moving within them as they speak with you. You long for brothers and sister who are not intent on figuring out how to improve your life but on being with you on wherever your journey leads ... a safe place for weary pilgrims.⁹³

It’s an environment where people can share, at any time, at a level where they feel safe. As Crabb observes, “The truth is that ... providing a safe space for another person to open up can be the hardest, most intentional work we do in our heroic journey. It can also be the most profound, both for us and for those we encounter.”⁹⁴

When we do training on building community at Community Festivals, we share two insights. We speak of how the life of the team working together *is* the ministry. If a team is of one heart and mind, enjoying one another, people are attracted to what they are seeing and want to join in.

The second one is to build authentic community, we need to be intentional. Community just doesn't happen. When someone within a supportive community says, "I need to confess to you guys," the temperature in the room changes. They're being bravely vulnerable, inviting reciprocity.

It's beyond good to be able to speak to the depths of what I am wrestling with, to be totally honest and to know it will be received, that my heart will be respected and understood right away.

When we met, we sensed Abba dancing over us! My friend went deep about his fall, I went deep about my family. Deep, deep, deep. Spirit insights rising. We heard from the Father.

In any social setting I try to do all I can to be intentional in creating an environment that is safe—a living community, a place that is home.

WHY DO WE MEET?

In an intentional community our external goals need to be bigger than any one of us. If all you're after from the community is to feel good, then the time spent together won't meet your needs. If, however, our goal is to grow and to make sure we are "seeking first the Kingdom" in whatever we do, we will be called out to so much more.

C.S. Lewis believes that community is a good laboratory for discovering God. That has been my experience over the last twenty years as we run Community Festivals around the world. People join a community that builds intentionally through Churches working together in celebration. Here they get a taste of the Kingdom and want more.

If we are seeking authentic community through creating a space for one another, then we experience the Kingdom being built. C.S. Lewis notes, “The little knots of Friends who turn their backs on the ‘World’ are those who really transform it”⁹⁵

As we met in our men’s group, it was the call to arms that sparked our excitement. We knew we could change this community and build more free men. It started with our group and now we are encouraging others. We heard the call. We are in!

I’ve joined a community of others. It gives me energy. I’m with a group of friends doing life together. We make time for Kingdom work. We are settled in being single at this stage of our life. We support each other and now we are helping, supporting other young men.

I am constantly encouraging mentees to search for a community—positive, ongoing, mutually benefiting groups of two to four brothers. A group that’s free of obligation; no *shoulds*, no underlying expectations. These groups change us.

The man I am today is different because of you guys.

MAKING A START

An Aussie mate told me how whenever his team meets, they commit to face anything within them that may interfere with their fellowship. They challenge each other in the area of unconfessed sin, giving one another an opportunity to come clean before a brother or a sister. Taking ten minutes out, they break into pairs, confessing anything to one another and praying. They call it the *Clean Team* time.

When we gather, I find it helpful for us together to welcome the Holy Spirit. Of course, He is already amongst us yet in welcoming

Him we are recognising the role He plays. He is invited into places within us that a part of us doesn't want Him to come into. Inviting Him in, welcoming into those places where we want Him to act means we will grow together. So we say, "Holy Spirit you are welcome here."

Already I have spoken of a helpful question that helps get mentoring underway. I use it regularly in small groups. It's the question God asked Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)

Snyder describes it as:

... an intimate, profound question. It's not a question to collect data. God knew where Adam was. It was a question to pursue and connect soul to soul. And it might be one of the most important questions we ever ask ourselves. Where are you? ... Whatever it is, let your soul speak for a moment. There are treasures waiting for you ... start by being honest with yourself about the true condition of your heart.⁹⁶

In listening to their responses I get a much clearer understanding of where each person is. It frames where it may be right to take the group next.

Early on in the life of the group, I will often volunteer to share first. It can help set the climate. If I am real, it helps builds intimacy. It's more helpful to bring my weaknesses than strengths. I try to not come from a teaching mindset; they need to understand this. I genuinely want to share where I am.

Listening to my spirit helps sensitise me to questions that may help the group move forward. It could be sharing a highlight since we last met or it may be sharing something we're struggling with. I may ask what God's been saying to us lately or perhaps it's sharing a passage from scripture where He's spoken.

I'm looking for a way for us to be real together and to hear from the Father.

Wesley led a revival in England during the 18th Century. Here are the five questions the Methodist bands (small groups) asked each other when they gathered together. Maybe you could try using them. They're *edgy* and they help us understand why the Methodists were at the forefront of revival:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?⁹⁷

REFLECTIONS ON COMMUNITY

I asked a former mentee to describe what happens when he gathers with his mate each week:

We normally try to surf together first; something fun and free that we can enjoy doing together. Our shared history and experience, these common experiences, form the foundation of our life together. It means we look forward to being with each other.

We share transparently, from our core, sacrificing, swallowing our pride even when we don't want to. We hear each other's spirits deeply. It's amazingly powerful to experience this spirit connection. It's authentic and it builds intimacy between us.

The strong bridge of trust between us means there's nothing that we're not willing to speak of. We know we are in this

THE IMPACT OF GATHERING TOGETHER

together. There are no techniques. We trust the journey we are both on. We respect and like each other. There's an understood value we will listen and not quickly move to giving advice.

Our spirits connecting means we have an unspoken accountability to each other's spirit. This connection helps us journey together.

There's permission to be ourselves without knowing the answers. We offer each other the gift of listening to one another's heart, not head. Through our shared lives we remind each other who we are and our commitment to God and His Kingdom.

How does this all happen? We don't really know but we do know it's an experience we feel in our guts. We look forward to being together. We trust the journey we are both on.

Others share similar responses:

Being with brothers reflects back to me who our Father is. It reminds me of how the Father sees me. 'I need you to reflect back to me who I am in the Father's eyes.'

In our group I can love myself and have nothing to hide. It's challenging to face the unfinished parts of me. Yet when I see others working on their unresolved issues, I am empowered to work on mine.

Our commitment to community invites us to go deeper. We connect with each other through being vulnerable. Rather than running from our unfinished parts, we turn and face them. It's hard, but it's healing. We feel we are reclaiming our true identity.

*We see beyond limitations to the potential in one another.
We see the best in them and join in fighting for it.*

*When I am passive in the group, seeing someone being
active inspires and sharpens me. We are not settling
for a group that meets with a checklist of sins, a box we
tick. We're wanting to fight so that we find our place in
the Kingdom.*

One guy who meets with three other brothers reflects on his group:

*Our meeting together is the highlight of my week. I can
be who I am. I can be a man who laughs and cries. My
brothers know they can ring me at 2 am and I would come
to help them. At times I feel like the four of us can conquer
the world together. We are "iron sharpening iron." We are
committed to challenging each other—not letting any of us
get away with anything.*

A MYSTERY

Paul writes to Timothy. "The Christian life is a great mystery, far exceeding our understanding" (1 Timothy 3:15 MSG). The word mystery in the New Testament is found twenty-seven times.

How community *happens* largely remains a mystery, a puzzle to me. I am aware there's a dynamic interplay taking place. I can't force or manufacture anything. God's at work. His Spirit is leading us, using us, working through us. It's bigger than any one person. Our spirits meet each other, and we experience community together.

Sometimes, days later, we are still tasting the *sweetness* of our time together. It changes us. It comes from the depths within us, and it reaches into the depths with others. "Deep speaks to deep" (Psalms 42:7). Walter Hooper, an American friend of C.S. Lewis recalls a point that Lewis made about friendship in his book, *The*

Four Loves, “What draws people to be friends is that they see the same truth. They share it.”⁹⁸

A friendship based around the same truth we share – that’s a useful way to help understand what happens in a small group. In the small group I am part of I experience a deep level of genuine friendship. David French describes it as, “Grace is something human beings need, like air or water. But actual friendship is just as necessary. There is a sacred quality to the trust and security that exists when friendship is genuine.”⁹⁹

Rather than trying to understand this mystery I tell myself this is all beyond reason so why not let my spirit simply enjoy it. Pascal writes, “If we submit everything to reason. Our religion will be left with nothing mysterious or supernatural.”¹⁰⁰

Crabb says, “Mystics who enjoy it and become lovers ... When spiritual people interact, something pours out of one soul and into another soul ...”¹⁰¹

CHOOSING VULNERABILITY

There were eight of us gathering for a weekend to welcome a young guy into manhood. We’d been on a hike, ate lunch, worshipped, and began sharing our story. I went first and relayed my story. People were moved and thanked me. On finishing, one of the guys spoke up, “I want to go next.” Nervously he began, “I have never told anyone this before.” He proceeded to share a painful experience where he still felt shame, guilt, and sadness.

As he finished, we gathered around him and prayed over him. There were tears and a giant bear hug as we finished. He’d been at church for several years, yet that moment of disclosure he would say was the start of his new life. Even though the weekend wasn’t supposedly for him, he asked if the *boy* could be washed out of him as a sign of this fresh start.

It’s led to his total transformation. He’s now discipling others and actively sharing his faith with anyone he can. He’s a free man.

As for his wife – she tells everyone she has a new husband. She’s formed a group with other ladies called “Wives of Warriors.”

He continues to be part of a small group supporting others who are growing in their faith, discipling them and running half-marathons with others from the group. He chose vulnerability and experienced the power of community, the power of God to reshape a life.

Vulnerability breaks those bound in fear. It builds the intimacy we long for. Our spirit knows when it is right to speak up and when it’s right to be silent. Listening to our spirit we will know what to share. Our spirit, one with His Spirit, is always searching for that connection with others.

THE WAY LIFE WAS MEANT TO BE

I am alive in the work I am doing in Japan. I’m working closely alongside a team of guys who remind me of David’s mighty men. Each one of us is separate, but we know we need each other. We are committed, willing to lay our lives down for the Kingdom. They are my armour-bearers at times, while on other occasions it’s reversed.

Jon Kuhrt, CEO of Hope into Action UK writes “Our humanity is found in our relationships with others. We are relational beings and the key to a truly rich life is mutuality: that your welfare is bound up with the welfare of others.”¹⁰²

We are not made to go it alone. We’re made for each other. There is no room for lone rangers. Snyder captures how I feel when I gather in a group with brothers, “As I was preparing this podcast ... I was emotional, excited at the thought of being with you. I feel this emotion welling up. I trust you, respect you. I am moved by your courage and the thousand small choices that’s got us here.”¹⁰³

Eldredge writes, “God is calling together little communities of the heart, to fight for one another and for the hearts of those who have not yet been set free. That camaraderie, that intimacy, that

incredible impact by a few stout hearted souls – that is available. It is the Christian life as Jesus gave it to us. It is completely normal.”¹⁰⁴

Paul writes, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

I am privileged to be part of a community of men who build each other up through being truthful with one other ... no matter how hard it is. It means we grow together. I am now experiencing a community that I once dreamt of. It hasn't come easy – we have had to fight for it. Rather than taking from each other we inspire and fire each other up as we do life together.

It's a fraternity where we meet often and commit to leaving *Egypt*. We are real, we fight together for our freedom, for our own and others' hearts to be set free.

It's a fierce battle. Satan won't easily give up.

It's a rich life. I want no other.

FATHERING IN MENTORING

*Thou my Great Father, and I Thy true son; Thou in me dwelling,
and I with Thee one*

— *Be Thou my Vision, Dallán Forgaill*

*To the fatherless He is a father ... The lonely he makes part of a
family*

— *Psalms 68:5 TPT*

*For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with
his own children*

— *1 Thessalonians 2:11*

*There is one rule above all others, for being a man. Whatever comes,
face it on your feet*

— *Robert Jordan*

THE SACRED JOURNEY

As a boy I sensed another land, a distant dream, a longing for the holy grail.

The sacred fire of every man's desiring.

Somewhere from the depths I made a life-long commitment to journey,

as if everything depended on it. For it did.

Jacob wrestling, gritted teeth, razor-like determination.

My spirit would shout, "I will never give up!" That strong spirit helped me survive.

I heard a commanding voice, "Stand! On your feet.

Face each battle that rages war against your soul. There is no other way."

From the darkness I recognised a man,

Emerging, walking towards me. Each step clearer through the mist.

Slowly, silently he comes alongside. I welcome him, he enters.

Integration felt deep in my tight, tingling belly. No words. I just knew its strength.

The promised presence, the flame ignited.

I rise each morning, it is there. I savour its gentle, wise, strength.

Yet, unsurprisingly, another voice with its questioning, "Do I really have what it takes?"

Evil seeking to sabotage victory, self-doubts planted through familiar shame and guilt twins.

The choice clearer, the voice growing louder, a reassuring truth.

Exposed the flesh begins unravelling.

His life brings life.

Tender warrior, sacred wound, redemption's freedom, dignity restored.

My masculine spirit soars alongside others, I am a man among men.
“Deep speaks to deep.” This freedom brings a clearer narrative. The
adventure unfolding.

I walk with my head held high. I know who I am.

Initiated.

Marty Woods

*“A man must go on a quest to discover the sacred fire in the sanctuary
of his own belly to ignite the flame in his heart.”*

Sam Keen (2010). “Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man”

A mentee reflects on his experience of fathering in a mentoring relationship:

I had recognised for some time that I needed a tangible father figure in my life. I couldn't put it into words, but I knew. I developed a solid mentoring relationship with Marty. We grew closer. We hadn't known each other for that long, yet there was something inside us both that felt we'd known each other for a long time. Our spirits connected – it was like we saw one another face to face. My spirit recognised his spirit right away. It is why I asked him to mentor me in the first place.

One day I took up all my courage and wrote, "I need an earthly dad. I'll be honest I'm a little frightened. I have had no relationship with my dad since I was 12. I've forgotten what it's like to have a dad. In fact I don't know what it's like to be a son. I'm nervous I could mess it up. I realise those fears are lies. I know a true father loves his son no matter what he does and is always proud of him.

God's my Father, I know that. I know you can't ever be my biological father, yet there's so much more. I would really like to have you as my spiritual dad.

Two years later, reflecting on the relationship, he wrote:

I needed this relationship. I'm thankful I had the courage to ask. I wanted a role model present in my life. Your love for me is like the love of a father towards his son. I know you are proud of me and how I'm growing. You believe in me, fight in my corner, support and challenge me, help me see what's happening for me, and give me the space and the means to grow.

There's so much more to being a dad than biology – there are connections, spirit, interactions, and a bond. You have done what a good dad does. You believed in me when I couldn't. You knew what my fight was.

Through our relationship I've learnt more about God than I ever learnt in Sunday School. Your treating me as a son has made me into the man I am today. There were questions I'd been too afraid to ask around the issue of my masculinity. What is that supposed to look like? Without a father I hadn't explored them. I was now free to ask whatever I wanted about sexuality and masculinity. I could get some help without feeling judged or laughed at for not knowing.

You've helped make the love of God as a Father real and tangible.

He invited me to take their wedding in the United States in the middle of COVID-19. There was no guarantee I could make it with limited (expensive) flights and a two-week quarantine on my return to Japan. The family tried to prepare him that most likely I wouldn't be able to make it. He told them, "You don't know Marty. He'll be there!" I made it and I married them.

FATHER WOUNDS, FATHER HUNGER

Thomas Wolfe articulated what intuitively we know. "The deepest search in life ... the thing that in one way or another was central to all our living was man's search to find a father, not merely the father of his flesh ... but the image of a strength and wisdom external to his need and superior to his hunger, to which the belief and power of his own life could be united."¹⁰⁵

Perhaps we are living through the most fatherless generation there has ever been. Our world is desperate for fathers. As Wolfe says, it is *the deepest search in life*. Most of us experience a wound created by our fathers. It may come when as a child we didn't receive the affection, affirmation, and validation that we needed. For a man, it results in him looking for validation in other places: women, sex, money, sports, career, etc. It has been said that the wound we get from our fathers may well be the most universal wound on earth.

Justin Hunt, producer of the documentary film “Absent” noted, “Nothing is more important to a young man, or a young woman, than a father’s love, respect, and acceptance. And nothing is more damaging than when the question ‘Am I good enough?’ is asked of the father by the child, and the answer is silence.”¹⁰⁶

Eldredge writes:

The enemy’s one central purpose is to separate us from the Father. He uses neglect ... he uses assaults and abuses to scream at a boy. It makes it so very, very hard to come home to the Father’s heart toward us. The details of each story are unique to the boy, but the effect is always a wound in the soul, and with it separation from, and suspicion of, the Father.¹⁰⁷

Many of us have the question, *Am I good enough?* It’s our personal and private insecurity. Again from Eldredge, “Every man has one core question – do I have what it takes? A boy is supposed to get that answer from his father. To know he is a ‘beloved son’ and to hear these words, ‘You have what it takes. You are the real deal.’”¹⁰⁸

We seek approval from our fathers. The role of the father is inextricably linked with the male spiritual journey. The reality is fatherlessness damages boys. It’s obvious everywhere. In mentoring, I rarely encounter guys who are not carrying some degree of wounding from their fathers (or father figures), whether present or absent.

Your mentee may be seeking a *father* figure. As mentors, it’s possible to play a role as a substitute, or additional father, to our mentee.

I didn’t have a father present in my life. Your commitment to me has helped me rise above my father wounds.

You've met my heart in ways my dad hasn't been able to, and maybe never will. There's something tragic yet beautiful in that.

THE MASCULINE JOURNEY

It's invaluable to reflect on your own journey to manhood. For years I lived with uncertainties, questions, lingering doubts about my masculine soul. In 2001, a friend told me of a newly released book by John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*. The name captured me. Within days I'd devoured it. I'd take it everywhere, read, reread, and passed on copies to friends. I still have that original tattered, dog-eared, underlined, taped-together book. It became my friend. I still can quote sections and know page numbers of significant quotes.

Years later, I attended a *Wild at Heart Boot Camp* in Sydney with Eldredge and his team. I recall him saying, "Our own brokenness is our path to our true masculine spirit." All of me yelled, Yes!

I found the most helpful way to define how a man lives is to learn to take responsibility, to face himself head on. Eldredge challenges men in, *Fathered by God*, "As a warrior, walk into a difficult situation and engage – don't hold back. If you hate conflict, then walk into it – move towards difficult situations ... Be decisive and engage – don't put things off ... Every time a man makes a hard decision the warrior in him is strengthened." Eldredge goes on to quote his friend Brett's advice, "Let people feel the weight of who you are and let them deal with it."¹⁰⁹

Now, I seek to help every young man I am mentoring to take this responsibility, go inside, face the past, the unresolved and anything they may be currently dealing with. Without doing this work it's challenging to fully embrace their own masculine journey, and in turn to be able to help others from a place of wholeness and healing.

There is something of my story in the poem on “The Sacred Journey.” Facing my brokenness led me to becoming an “overcomer.” From that point on it was as if the handbrake was taken off. I got new speed. I could more effectively support others, helping them discover and experience their own masculine spirit. It became the heart of my mentoring. I’d speak sonship over mentees, and help them fight against an *orphan* spirit.

I now witness an increasing number of men coming alive; experiencing, feeling, enjoying, and celebrating their masculine spirit.

SPIRITUAL FATHERING

Spiritual fathering has little to do with biological fathering. It helps to remember that Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist and Paul were spiritual fathers even though they were not married and did not have biological children.

Paul writing to the Corinthians is very direct. He calls them his sons and says: “You don’t have many fathers who correct you in love. But I’m a true father to you, for I became your father when I gave you the gospel and brought you into union with Jesus, the Anointed One” (1 Corinthians 4:15 TPT).

Paul refers to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2), Titus (Titus 1:4) and Onesimus (Philemon 1:10) as his sons. Observing Paul’s relationship with Timothy you sense the obvious love, connection and affection. He says of him, “There is no one else quite like him” (Philippians 2:20).

God is fiercely committed to fathering us. He chooses to use men (married or not) to play a role as spiritual fathers in our lives. Mentoring is a form of fathering that leads men to God, our true Father.

Eldredge captures a profound truth:

A boy has to learn in his journey that he becomes a man
only through the active intervention of his father (and

the fellowship of men). It cannot happen any other way. **Masculinity is bestowed. A boy learns who he is and what he's made of from a man (or a company of men). This can't be learned in any other place ...** If the father gives his son anything at all worth remembering, it is always the passing on of his masculinity.¹¹⁰ (emphasis mine)

Sit with that. Masculinity is passed on. We need strong role models of what a man is. We need men willing to do their soul work so they can help bestow masculinity on another – it's God's design.

FACING THE LIES

To be that man who could help others, I had to face an agreement within me that it was not possible for me to be a spiritual father. Our son died at birth. We had no other children. I heard a strong voice telling me I was disqualified. Besides, there was my own story, as the son of my father.

Was I doing fathering? I was simply doing what was coming naturally – what my first mentor (and father-figure) Rod had done for me. I faced the lie, broke the agreement that I could not truly be a father. I can't fully explain why I have become a father to many. I no longer run from it. Rather, I embrace the privilege, joy and responsibility I never expected. I recall the moment when a mentee told me, *You don't do mentoring, you do fathering.* He went on to say:

I felt my childhood was robbed from me. I never saw the face of our Heavenly Father in the face of my earthly father. I craved fatherly affirmation. I was desperate to hear my dad say, 'You're good enough, I'm proud of you, I enjoy being with you.' In my early 20's, I met Marty. I got my 'fathering' from him. He showed me what our Heavenly Father was like. He delighted in me, listened, showed up,

loved me where I was at. It was powerful. I saw in him the face of our Heavenly Father.

Having a spiritual father gave me a healthy picture of God. I finally could pray to God and call Him "Father." Marty made the love of God as a father real and tangible. I was talking to my therapist about it. She stopped for a moment and said, "You have found your father." Now, through our relationship, things have started changing between my earthly dad and me.

Accompanying this fathering role has been a growing passion to help mentees commit towards the restoration of broken hearts with their own fathers, if it is at all possible. What I wanted to see happen is laid out in the final verse of the Old Testament, "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers ..." (Malachi 4:6, ESV).

Whenever I see mentees connecting with their fathers in new ways I celebrate. One wrote:

I watch how excited and encouraged you get when you hear of any positive, bridge-forming experiences between my dad and me.

I try to understand and help each mentee work through any issue in their relationship with their father. One wrote:

My own dad struggled, tried to be strong for us kids. As I grew older I began to truly understand what he had to manage. You helped me to choose to reach out to my dad. One day I bared my heart to him. I opened the door and threw myself through the wall I'd built up and protected myself from, letting my dad in.

My dad apologised that he wasn't the father he would have liked to have been. He was preoccupied with painful

challenges at work that consumed him, sapping an ability to see me. Talking to him I realised I was both a son but we were brothers. I became more secure in being a man of God.

As this restoration process was happening for him we ran a “Welcome to Manhood” weekend where he invited his father and uncle. Over the weekend, the father apologised for the impact of his *not being present* behaviour. His son received these words and forgave him. Today they have a whole new father-son relationship.

I listened to an account of a pastor in the United States who was part of a growing church that collapsed dramatically. This pastor was wounded by the lead pastor. He vocalised, “He self-identified as a father to many of us who felt fatherless and needed direction. You don’t get to self-identify as someone’s dad. And then leave.”¹¹

He’s right, spiritual fathering is not something to be taken lightly. It comes with great responsibility.

I always wanted to see and call God, Father. But I just couldn’t, because my earthly dad didn’t do much of a job of showing me the Father’s heart. Somehow God sent Marty, into my life, a man who truly saw me. I made a choice to invite him to be my spiritual father. He embraced it, cheered me on, and was proud of me.

Mentoring the guys I do is fathering from the love and the heart of the Father. It’s showing the Father’s face. It’s living the freedom He has given me. It’s sacred.

When I am asked to play a role as a *spiritual father* I enquire why they are looking for such a relationship. We talk over potential pitfalls. I am aware they could see me as someone to fulfil their needs; perhaps project a picture of a father they didn’t have.

I let them know, “A man has strong and clear boundaries. We both desire no misunderstandings. With your physical father you had no choice, this time you have every choice.” Aware of this, I

seek to be someone who shows up, engages with them, and calls out the best in them.

I never hesitate to take them on. As the writer of Proverbs says: “Although rebellion is woven into a young man’s heart, tough discipline can make him into a man” (Proverbs 22:15 TPT).

I want my life to reflect to mentees, as clearly as possible, what our Heavenly Father is like. I want to be someone who sees them, believes in them, who thinks they’re amazing. This is how the Father sees us. I want to fight alongside them, not reacting negatively to their falls, rather showing grace as I recognise their potential. I want them to experience a model of what a good father can be like, so they may possibly be kind fathers to their own children one day.

I walk more confidently with you in my corner. I am learning to be a son. I am talking to a person with no agenda, no ulterior motive. I know this, you’re for me.

The footprints you leave me as a spiritual father means I can put my feet into your prints.

I no longer have an orphaned spirit. You’re the father I never had. You make the love of God as a father real and tangible.

Snyder writes, “The journey to sonship is not a one-time event but an on-going process, as Jesus modelled, of maturing in oneness.” He then adds eight life-changing words. They are my story and the story of many I mentor: “When the son is ready, the Father appears.”¹¹²

SONS WATCH FATHERS

Spiritual fathering means being aware you are being watched.

*What I like most about you is you want to be with God.
I'm watching you as you walk with the Father.*

It is also being alongside them in hard times, helping extract more of the true man from them.

*When I failed you trusted me. I had never experienced
that before.*

It's calling them out to be warriors, challenging them to grow into the men God has made them to be.

*I met, in you, another father, who showed me how to be
a man. You always believed in me. I told you everything.
Yet I always knew this was my life, my fight.*

I will let them down. They will see my frailties. I can't control the relationship. Mentoring generally has a use by date; spiritual fathering is for much longer – possibly for life.

WE NEED MORE SPIRITUAL FATHERS

A thirteen-year old boy challenged men in his church, "I'm entering adolescence. I need Christian men to show me how to be a man of God." So many young men are wilting, living in self-conscious cages. Where are the men stepping up to play a fathering role?

There may be many teachers in the church, not always many models of fathers. We need *life giving* men, overflowing with the Father's heart, willing to develop young men and help change the next generation. Men with a spiritual heart of a father to develop young men – to help raise them up.

Is that a role you could play? It begins by knowing and enjoying who you are – unconditionally loved and fully accepted by Abba. Dwell in His arms, seek to discover more of the security, validation and the potential He has given you.

The masculine spirit within all men wants to unleash other men to bear their true image. Fathering helps unlock this image and beckons it out. Here is an invitation for men who have something to give, to go beyond themselves and play a life-changing role in a younger man's life.

If you are looking for a strong male role model in your life, invite God to introduce one to you. If you are feeling orphaned, ask God for a spiritual father. Learn to grow as a son and as a man. This journey to manhood is worthy of our best efforts.

I have a friend whose dad would say to him:

"I am your dad, not your Father. You only have one Father. He gave me the great gift to be your dad. My job is to give you back to him. I will fail you. I am broken. Yet here is a bedrock truth; your Heavenly Father won't let you down or leave you."

KNOW YOUR IDENTITY

Eric Erickson writes of fathers, "True fathers are impressive ... they are also importantly involved in the awakening of the child's identity ... they love us differently, more dangerously."¹¹³

Many guys I mentor feel overwhelmed, despairing, challenged to see or feel beyond the battle within. It can feel, internally at least, that these struggles define them. Some feel trapped by their past. How can they discover their true identity?

I come to this one word – *sonship*. How easy is it to forget our identity as sons? Yet as you can hear it, know it and live from that place, you discover the truth of sonship in your heart. It's empowering. You can experience a strong masculine spirit deep within. As you embrace it you realise who you are and you can live it out.

I spend a great deal of time reminding men of their true identity as a son. It is the best way I know to help them find their

true self. What do I most want them to know? To live a life as a beloved son.

I call God, *Father* most of the time. It's a relationship. I'm a son and He's my Dad. Knowing I am His son gives me great strength. I try to model what it means to walk with the Father – for mentees to see me connecting to Him. As I do that, I am inviting them to go deeper into sonship. Sonship is a choice. It is here you first surrender your heart to unlearn the incorrect image of a father before you can learn Him as He truly is.

Snyder speaks of Jesus, “needing to receive the validation of His Father before he launched into his life’s mission.” Jesus is modelling what it looks like to live as God’s Son:

It’s amazing to think that even Jesus needed to receive the validation of his Father before he launched into his life’s mission. I wonder what it was like for him to hear those words from his Father: **‘Son, you are the real deal. You have what it takes. I delight in you.’** (Matthew 3:17, my paraphrase). His Father’s constant validation was a holy reservoir from which Jesus drew strength for the rest of his days.¹¹⁴

Imagine what it would be like to receive that validation from the Father, to have that reservoir from which to drink daily. The more we are integrated in our masculine soul, the more unstoppable we are.

It’s not always simple to choose this spirit of sonship. The world will constantly wage war against that choice, tempting us to live from fear and self-doubts. Our challenge is to throw off everything that hinders us from running this race. God wants to reveal himself as a father. He doesn’t leave us fatherless or as orphans. Our spirit cries out, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). What’s your spirit saying to the Father?

REFLECTIONS ON HAVING A SPIRITUAL FATHER

A reflection from a mentee on having a spiritual father:

Five years ago I asked Marty to be my spiritual father. God restored my heart by giving me a father, willing to joyfully pursue me. Through Marty God showed me what the Father truly is like; a compassionate God, who feels pleasure in His children.

Recently I got married. As we were driving to the airport to pick Jenny and Marty up, tears overwhelmed me. I recalled Morgan Snyder's words, "When the son is ready, the Father comes." I realised I was welcoming both the Father and Marty. The profound truth of this was why I was weeping. I felt God's heart and his joy over all that was happening. Marty took our wedding service. It was such a celebration. He was a father who delighted in me and everyone witnessed that. The Father and a spiritual father turned up at our wedding. Many guests told us they had not experienced anything like this before.

And a reflection from a second mentee:

Meeting you and then you being willing to mentor me meant the trajectory of my life forever changed. Yet long before you, my Heavenly Father was chasing after me, calling me home to deeper freedom and greater joy as his beloved son. Shortly into our mentoring sessions, I knew the purpose of us being together was for you to be a spiritual father to me. At this time, Abba's love for me as his son became the defining marker of my life. He bestowed on me the gift of sonship. You played an integral role in this process. I felt seen and loved. Our weekly calls, emails, and books you sent my way blessed my masculine initiation.

A WILLING SPIRIT

Five years later, you continue to be a father in my life from afar, still sending books and emails, Zoom calls, always eager to pick up where we last left off. In this epilogue to our mentoring relationship, I'm now equipped to love and offer my strength on behalf of my family. I feel I am now sent out by you to find my own story in God's Kingdom, freed to live as a man for others.

Now, as a husband to my beautiful wife and a father to our soon-to-arrive first child, I celebrate the man I'm becoming, and I give thanks to the Father for the man who helped me get here.

PART 5

The Bigger Picture

THE LIFE OF THE MENTOR

Character is destiny

– Heraclitus, Greek philosopher

Above all, set yourself apart as a model of a life nobly lived

– Titus 2:7 TPT

The sum of how you live your life each day becomes your legacy

– John Maxwell

Because of our love for you we were ready to share with you not only the Good News from God but even our own lives. You were so dear to us!

– 1 Thessalonians 2:8 GNT

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers

– Acts 20:28

RULE FOR A NEW BROTHER—FOLLOWING JESUS

You are called to follow Jesus closely.

With Him you will take the road up to Jerusalem, the city of suffering and glorification

With Him you will give everything that the Kingdom may come.

On this road you are called to be least of all and not master:

to carry others burdens and not lay your own on them,

to give freedom instead of taking it

to grow poor in order to make others rich

to take the cross upon yourself thus bringing joy to others,

to die in order that others may live

This is the mystery of the Gospel ...

So, keep Jesus Christ before your eyes

Don't hesitate to go anywhere He leads you;

don't stay where you are and don't look back

but look forward with eagerness to what lies ahead.¹¹⁵

I had a life-changing moment in my late twenties. I was running a 100-hour relay raising money for clean water in India. I just happened to get the leg for the dawn run. That morning, something took place which I'd never experienced before. I still find it difficult to explain. I remember it vividly. One minute I was running, the next I was on the ground weeping. God pulled back the curtain revealing the darkness in my heart. It was totally unexpected. I didn't ask to see it. I didn't like what I saw.

I glimpsed the horror of my sin. There it was: control, half-truths, mixed motives, using people, lust, a phoney self. Everything laid bare. Waves of sobbing overtook me. Grief, sadness, horror as a searing light divulged my impure motives. After a few minutes I resumed running, but what I saw as dawn broke took many months to process. As I kept facing it, God revealed more of the darkness within. Even now, the moment lives with me. It was hard, yet it was sacred.

There've been other times where God turned on the light, disclosing the works of my flesh "waging war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11). Yet, nothing quite like the power of that early morning.

THE BATTLE OF THE FLESH VERSUS THE SPIRIT

The heart of this chapter is captured by Rick Warren's words, "Private purity is the source of public power."¹⁶

I'm left pondering, is this the most important chapter in the book? *Doing the work*, in the *secret places*, is the source of any public power I may have. It's this which sets me up to truly serve mentees. A shorter summary may be *work through your stuff so you can help others*.

Understanding the process and learning skills that equip you in mentoring are important. So too is doing the discipline. "He who rules his spirit (is greater) than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32 ESV).

A truth pervading this book is that mentoring is the journey to strengthen the spirit over the insatiable demands of the flesh. I have been exploring the role of the human spirit and ongoing references to the significance of exposing the works of the flesh. I want to focus on this battle with the flesh. It needs to be taken on and taken out. Paul exhorts us to “purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Paul also writes, “Sin deceived me” (Romans 7:11). Any time, at any point, we are one step away from sin. A moment of madness can undermine our relationships, life, and ministry ... totally. I have seen it happen too often. Like Esau, we sell our inheritance for a bowl of lentils. It’s scary.

We never come to whatever we are doing with totally pure motives. How is it possible though, to ensure we’re not blinded by our own needs as we mentor? “Lord, forgive my hidden flaws whenever you find them. Keep cleansing me, God, and keep me from my secret, selfish sins; may they never rule over me” (Psalms 19:12-13 TPT).

Solomon’s words have become my mantra, “Above all else guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23). The most effective way I guard my heart is taking hold of Paul’s encouragement to put the armour on. I do it each day ... first thing. His first item is the belt of truth (Ephesians. 6:14). It’s telling the truth to myself, especially the state of my lower nature.

This is truth in the *hidden places* (Psalms 51:6 CEB), the *inward parts* (LEB). It’s this truth that sets us free (John 8:32). It was a profound moment when I understood this verse isn’t simply referring to the truth about Jesus. It’s also knowing the truth about ourselves. If I can own my behaviour, however painful, it brings a truth that liberates.

When I’m asked what is the most significant ingredient to be an effective mentor, my first response is not about being a good listener or being interested in a mentee. Rather, it’s that you have to

grapple, do the internal work that sets you up to truly be present. Deal with the noise in your soul and you will grow a free, available spirit.

To strengthen our inner life, here are some guides that have helped me.

DYING

I recall as a seventeen-year old wanting to take my relationship with God seriously. If I was to help others, then I needed to move to the offensive and make choices for purity. I chose to die; to face anything that fed my flesh. It meant saying no to porn and to masturbating. It was totally grace that got me there and a willing spirit that locked in to that decision.

I am convinced that any ministry I have today is because of those *death-to-flesh* choices. It was radical. My spirit was desperate to do whatever it took to be a man of God. Bonhoeffer's words captured it, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."¹⁷

Each day (hour!) since then, I have sought to keep making choices to die; to die daily to my ego. Not always wholeheartedly, but consistently – relentlessly. Dying frees me. It gifts me an internal authority to speak into mentee's lives.

Paul writes, "I train like a champion athlete. I subdue my body and get it under my control, so that after preaching the good news to others I myself won't be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27 TPT). Other translations use these words for subdue, "tame, discipline, pommel, control, chastise, toughen, harden, drive, train, strike a blow, punish my flesh." All very active verbs.

I die because I don't want to be disqualified. Sometimes death is dramatic. I was part of a discipleship challenge, Exodus 90 (see link in Appendix 4), where we committed to 90 days of cold showers. It was challenging when it was -8 °C outside! I would jump into the shower and yell, "Die! Die!" My wife, hearing the shouts, thought it was just a little extreme. I'd keep telling her "It's helping me die."

I die because I want to “bear abundant fruit” (John 15:8). Resisting the flesh provides a liberating opportunity to say yes to God, yes to freedom. It’s “life in all its fullness” (John 10:10b).

Dying to your flesh helps you to make more room for others. When I am asked how come I am free, I let them know, “because I’m dying.” It’s that simple, it’s death and it’s dramatic. No half-heartedness. It requires a 100% – every part of us. Everything. It’s becoming a flesh-killer.

Why so much dying? There is no other way to produce a life that lasts. If we crucify the flesh (Galatians 5:24) we will truly live. We will help free others. Paul says to the Corinthians, “So, then, death is at work in us but it releases life in you” (2 Corinthians 4:12 TPT). You grow strong by dying to self.

Show. No. Mercy. “If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away” (Matthew 5:29). Desperation for freedom leads to deliverance.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you anything you have to die to.

It’s Not About You

A way to die is to remind yourself our lives are not about us. Bob Goff writes:

The next time you’re tempted to boast, just say under your breath, ‘It’s not about me.’ Say it a dozen times a day. Say it a thousand times a month. Say it when you wake up and when you go to sleep. Say it again and again, ‘It’s not about me. It’s not about me.’ ... Make it your anthem and your prayer.¹¹⁸

A friend, Cassie Carstens says:

It’s essential that a mentor’s focus and intended outcome of the mentoring relationship benefits the mentee and the common good of society, not the mentor. A

mentor should never take too much credit for the success of their mentee.

SHEPHERDING OTHERS TO FREEDOM

Mentoring is shepherding – a watchman on the wall, looking out for the lambs God has entrusted to us. Peter captures it like this:

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, **watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing**, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but **eager to serve**; not Lording it over those entrusted to you, but **being examples to the flock**. (1 Peter 5:2-3, emphasis mine)

We are called to be *examples to the flock*. Paul explains to the elders at Ephesus, “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you” (Acts 20:17), “in everything I did I showed you that by this kind of work we must help the weak” (Acts 20:35). Paul is saying, the way I live is how you have to do it.

Peter is a fisherman – yet Jesus tells him to *take care of my sheep* (John 21:17). Pope Francis in speaking to the world's Catholic priests asked them to “be shepherds with the smell of sheep.”¹¹⁹

Shepherds love their sheep, look after them and stay close to them. Our role as shepherd/mentor is feeding the lambs, not feeding off them. It's making room in our heart for them. It's not about our own validation. It's to show mercy like Jesus did. “When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36 MSG).

Paul encapsulates shepherd-mentoring as he writes to the Thessalonians, “We showed you kindness and were gentle among you. We cared for you in the same way a nursing mother cares for her own children. With a mother's love and affectionate attachment to you, we were very happy to share with you not only the

gospel of God but also our lives – because you had become so dear to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 TPT). Be kind to the sheep God has entrusted to you. Be kind to yourself.

I first encountered God as the Good Shepherd. I now want to *shepherd* and show up for the lambs God has entrusted to me. We’re all sheep and we can’t truly protect ourselves from the wolves. When wolves are nearby, that’s when the sheep draw closer to the Shepherd for protection.

MINISTERING IN WEAKNESS

Rohr writes where our authority in ministry comes from:

Until there has been a journey through suffering, I don’t believe that we have true healing authority. We don’t have the ability to lead anybody to any place new unless we have walked it ourselves to some degree. In general, we can only lead people on the spiritual journey as far as we ourselves have gone.

The best thing we can do for people is to stay on the journey ourselves. We transform people to the degree we have been transformed. When we can somehow be compassion, not just talk about compassion; when we can be healed and not just talk about healing, then we are, as Henri Nouwen said so well, “wounded healers,” but not before.

It’s all about what each of us does with the wound. If we ourselves have never walked through some kind of suffering ... we probably will give people “head” answers. We don’t touch or heal their hearts because our own have not been transformed.¹²⁰

Eldredge said at the Wild at Heart Boot Camp “Our wounds can become a scar and in time turn into a badge of honour.” It

can be a challenge to believe this when we are in the midst of our struggles. Some mentees get surprised when I share my weakness—somehow they think I must be different from them. I was thankful when one mentee said to me, *I like you mentoring me cause you haven't got it all together!*

Paul lets us know how we can help others when we have our unresolved issues. “My weakness becomes a portal to God’s power” (2 Corinthians 12:10 TPT).

We all have deep unconscious needs. Sharing our lives together in weakness is a gift. It is holy. My authority to speak into their lives comes from knowing my weaknesses. Vulnerability is strength. David, taking up the throne of Israel says, “... though I am the anointed king, I am weak” (2 Samuel 3:39). Gumbel comments, “Even your weakness is anointed.”¹²¹

Despite my weakness – or maybe because of it – I frequently hear the Father saying to me, “I trust you.”

BEING SEPARATE

I have previously written of the significance of being separate in your relationship with your mentee. Here I want to speak of the personal choices the mentor makes in their life to ensure a healthy separation. It’s possible for a parent to share too much with their children. So, in mentoring, choosing clear boundaries helps build a healthy separation that creates more possibilities for mentees to thrive.

Knowing your boundaries means you don’t have to disclose everything. Besides, in mentoring, it’s not what you say that will help the most. It’s about being with them, and alongside them on their journey.

Being *separate* needs a strong resolve within you to not use anyone for your needs. Attachments are subtle, sneaky, and lead to the feeding of hidden desires. The goal is appropriate attachment – not becoming enmeshed in their world, having to *fix them*.

I make a point of not asking for any money or special favours. I don't want to presume or create any hidden agendas, angling to take anything from anyone. Some mentees give unexpected gifts. One offered me the opportunity to be his flight buddy as he worked for an airline. It was a generous offer. When he told me the offer might need to finish, I recall my spirit rejoicing. I was free and separate. His gift wasn't why I was in the relationship.

I observe the more I am able to be separate, the more trust builds between us. I can be free, warm and healthily detached. When I am like this, mentees are freer to complete their life's purpose. John Maxwell believes his success is when others succeed.

The Father gives me wide, open arms. I can allow people into my heart. My hope is I will be both close and separate. Jesus models what separateness is. He knew who He was and where he was going (John 8:14). Knowing this meant He could serve and wash the disciples' feet (John 13:3-4).

Jesus tells them, "This is why the Father loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so I am free to take it up again. No one takes it from me" (John 10:18 MSG). That is a separated person.

BEING AN ENTHUSIAST

One quality that has helped in my mentoring is enthusiasm. Bear Grylls writes:

"Be the most enthusiastic person you know. Enthusiasm sustains you when times are tough, encourages those around you. That's totally infectious."¹²²

This was Paul. "You need to know, friends, that thanking God over and over for you is not only a pleasure; it's a must. We have to do it. Your faith is growing phenomenally; your love for each other is developing wonderfully. Why, it's only right that we give thanks. We're so proud of you; you're so steady and determined in your faith despite all the hard times that have come down on

you. We tell everyone we meet in the churches all about you" (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 MSG.)

Paul shares the Macedonians' spirit of generosity with the Corinthian Church. He wanted to stir them to a greater love, "by mentioning the enthusiasm of the Macedonians as a challenge to you" (2 Corinthians 8:8 TPT). This is what enthusiasm does; it stirs our spirit, we're challenged, we come alive. I recall how Rod was always enthusiastic about what I was doing. It inspired me to be enthusiastic towards others.

You didn't bring your own world to our mentoring times, rather you entered into mine with pure excitement and enjoyment.

You are always so interested in me. Sometimes I think you are more excited than I am about my growth.

A friend's mum has a rule. Whenever she feels down, she tries to actively (enthusiastically) seek someone out to encourage and bless. In so doing, her spirit is activated and she is blessed and encouraged. Psychologist John Gottman is famous for his claim that the only thing that matters in determining whether or not a married couple stays together is whether they have five times more positive than negative interactions.¹²³ It's a useful rule of thumb for mentoring.

PURSUING GOD

The significance of our relationship with the Father is the cornerstone. Cassie tells me that for him, the most damaging mistake a mentor can make is if they don't spend enough time with God. They will then be reflecting themselves instead of God.

Mallison says, "The openness and honesty we will need to make effective mentoring relationships, grows out of our openness with and obedience to God. From this living relationship will come our empowerment by the Holy Spirit to mentor others."¹²⁴

Eldredge emphasises the role of the sage:

They commune with God – an existence entirely different from and utterly superior to the life of the expert. Whatever counsel he offers he draws you to God, not to self-reliance. He has learned not to lean upon his wisdom, knowing that God is often asking things of us that seem counter-intuitive and thus his wisdom (and expertise) are fully submitted to God ... the sage draws us to God. He offers us the gift of presence, the richness of a soul that has lived long with God!¹²⁵

I want to be a sage offering this *gift of presence*. How do you get there? One invaluable way for me has been through contemplation and retreating. I take off to the *desert* to meet with the Father. Here, I can relax. A space opens within. The unconscious becomes more conscious.

My relationship with God has been forged through times alone with Him. I learn to become more familiar with His voice. It's why I work hard to have a sabbath each week. I get to the beach to be with my Dad. The closer I grow to Him, the more easily I can see anything that's off-centre. My spirit challenges me and helps me to overcome what's not of God.

Early in my mentoring, God reminded me of Moses' words to the Israelites, fearful of the approaching Egyptian army, "The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:14). In this stillness, I grow in the awareness of His Presence. He fights for me. I need holiness. Peterson says; "Holiness is the most attractive quality, the most intense experience we ever get of pure life – authentic, first-hand living, not life looked at and enjoyed from a distance ... "Holiness is a furnace that transforms the men and women who enter it."¹²⁶

The famous Scottish Preacher, Robert Murray M'Cheyne said, "My people's greatest need is my own personal holiness."¹²⁷

I observe the way you love your wife. I appreciate watching how you work together. You lay your life down for her and she for you. I see that it comes from the sacrifice of waiting and trusting.

ACCOUNTABILITY

This word has appeared many times in this book. If I am always encouraging mentees to do it, I need to ensure I have suitably robust structures in place that hold me to account. I want to be answerable for my actions.

I have set in place a relationship with my mentor who provides an external mirror to explore how I'm going. Helping others is a subjective experience and the capacity to deceive myself is real. I need a place to make explicit what is implicit – to expose anything that is not healthy. When I share an issue I'm concerned about, my mentor will often reassure me with these words: "The fact you are talking about it with me means it is more likely than not you won't be taken out by it."

As for my running mate, I am very specific with what I share. He knows everything. It's freeing. I let him know what is really happening. We send a text to each other across three areas: how have I managed to control where my eyes have been looking; how I've gone at "taking captive every thought" (2 Corinthians 10:5 - I've always found that to be the most challenging verse in the Bible!); and finally how did I go at not "fishing" – trying to find things that may appear OK yet if I am honest with myself, I am secretly feeding my flesh.

A mentee gave me another side to the fishing analogy. He says, *when I give, even just a little to the flesh, it is like I am in the water and the blood from my wound attracts the sharks. They swim around ready to devour me at any opportunity.* My challenge is to do what Paul says, "Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires"

(Romans 13:14). So, I have found it a useful daily rhythm to be ruthless in taking on the flesh.

*I am thankful for someone in the same place as me who
I am swapping field notes with. We are at our best when
we are in the bunker fighting together. He is alongside me.
I know he has my back!*

As a mentor, I don't play that role. As a running mate I do.

God trusts me. I don't always trust myself. I am too aware of my capacity to deceive myself. Accountability pushes me further into the light.

Who do you need to be more accountable to?

AS A MENTOR, I WANT TO ...

Keep a firm grip on my character.

Be the truest version possible of me.

Not be "doing" ministry. I want it to flow from who I am.

Hear mentees say, "You being yourself means I can be myself."

Deal with my "stuff" so I am more present for others.

Be gentle with myself so I can be gentle with others.

Laugh and smile more at myself and with others.

Breathe the air, "shoot the breeze" with mates.

Let the little boy in me play, allowing him to be more present in my life.

Be a good guy to be around.

Be someone who anticipates the needs of others – to know what they want before they even do.

Be faithful to the end, an overcomer.

I want to show more grit and determination ... to keep saying,
“I will not give up.”

Be with God every day, each moment.

Strengthen a strong, willing spirit.

Grow an inward journey that equips me for the journey outward.

Live a life of integrity, authenticity, and faithfulness.

Paul writes, “Saying with complete honesty and a clear conscience that God has empowered us to conduct ourselves in a holy manner and with no hidden agenda” (2 Corinthians 1:12 TPT).

This chapter is a call to a life of purity. Paul instructs his “son in the faith,” Timothy with three words, “Keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22).

Jude writing to faithful Christians encourages them to, “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 1:21 ESV).

Keeping yourself pure and keeping yourself in the love of God are what we need to take responsibility for. Choose them and we will live a life, *not about me*, rather a life for others.

During my years as a school teacher, I would often listen to Keith Green singing “Rushing Wind” before leaving for school. It became my anthem. I would passionately sing out the words. It’s what my spirit was crying out to God for—to live a pure and holy life:

*Rushing wind blow this temple
Blowing out the dust within
Come and breathe your breath upon me
I’ve been born again.*

THE LIFE OF THE MENTOR

*Holy Spirit I surrender
Take me where you want to go
Plant me by your living waters
Plant me deep so I can grow.*

*Jesus you're the One
Who set my spirit free
Use me Lord glorify
Your Holy Name through me.*

*Separate me from this world Lord
Sanctify my life for you
Daily change me to your image
Help me bear good fruit ...¹²⁸*

LIVING IN KAIROS

Most people die with their music still locked up inside them

— Benjamin Disraeli

Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire

— Catherine of Siena

God takes a long time to act suddenly

— Anonymous

*Time cannot be run backwards ... any more than you can stir milk
back out of tea*

— Francis Spufford

*For just one day of intimacy with you is like a thousand days of joy
rolled into one!*

— Psalms 84:10 TPT

Eric was frustrated. I recall meeting him and thinking he's a nice guy. I watched him observing his friends embracing a journey towards freedom. He was genuinely excited about their growth, yet frustrated that he didn't feel he was growing. He asked if I would be willing to mentor him. I knew he wanted to face what was holding him back.

He shared his struggles. He felt stuck. We talked about a range of things he wanted me to know about him if I was going to help him. We were around an hour into our time together. I have no idea how this happened but a question came for him, "Eric, for a moment can we do something a little different. Can you imagine a wall?"

"Yes, yes I can. I see it now. It's tall and red brick. It's very high, it's big." I asked, "Is there a door?" "Yeah, there's a door and I am going up to it now." He described it specifically. "Can you open it?" "Yeah, I can." "What do you see inside?"

Eric responded, "I am walking through the door. It's dark, I'm not sure ... (a few moments passed), now I can see an open space. It's bright and open and full of fresh air. I'm walking around the open area.

Wait, there's Jesus. I'm walking towards Him. He's very happy to see me. He began to describe what he and Jesus were talking about. He became animated. I had been reading a book by Henri Nouwen. I asked if I could read a section to him:

You have come to realise that you must leave the old country and enter the new ... You are being asked to trust that you will find what you need in the new country. This requires the death of what has become so precious to you: influence, success, yes, even affection and praise ... The only way to go there is naked and vulnerable ... you enter it ... but you feel afraid and start longing again for all you left behind ... Risk a few more steps into the new country. Trusting that each

time you enter it you will feel more comfortable and be able to stay longer ...¹²⁹

We talked about what leaving would mean. Could he leave the old ways? We read Paul's words:

If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realise we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land! (Romans 6:1-3 MSG)

By now, Eric was more than relaxed; there was spontaneous laughter. He was being himself. It was very different from how we started. We'd been together for over two hours. It didn't feel like it.

Marty, I am ready for a new life in a new land. I want to leave the old country.

I suggested we take off our shoes, kneel and pray. It was *holy ground*. He began. It was as if all of him was praying:

Father... Daddy. I want to say I am leaving the old country. I am moving into the new. This is where I want to be, here's where I now belong. I'll listen to you, be with you in tough times and as I grow. Help me to see who I am as I live in this new country. I know for sure I'm loved by you. I feel gratitude, relief, excitement. I'm free.

We celebrated the moment. He said "I know what I want to do. I am going to have a cold shower to symbolise leaving the old and entering this new country of grace." The next day he wrote:

I stood for a few moments outside the shower. It was midnight. I had work the next day but all I felt was excitement. I moved under the cold water and felt the air leave my lungs. It didn't feel uncomfortable. It felt amazing. It was a perfect physical experience to match the change. I felt cleaned, refined, strong, and ready to say goodbye to the old view of myself.

Marty, I've left the old land. Ahead is a new life in a new land.

Reflecting back on the time, I still celebrate how open he was to leaving his old life. It was a moment when time, space and a willing spirit converged. His insights were like an explosion that kept expanding inside of him. Issues became clearer for him. The Father had room to speak, influence, and heal. Together we watched and experienced something new coming to birth.

Eric saw beyond his present self to who he could become. One evening changed his life. He tasted the new country, no need to return to the old. *A new life in a new land.*

UNDERSTANDING KAIROS

Ancient Greek has two words for time: **chronos**, which represents chronological time and **kairos**, which represents a providential moment for decision or action, God's time, real time.

Kairos is when God acts. Paul writes, "When the right time came, God sent his Son" (Galatians 4:4 ERV). This is the *fullness* of time, the opportune or appointed time. God knew the best *time* for the Son of Man to come. Jesus' arrival was God's kairos. He was bringing it all together at the right time.

God's time is uniquely different. He is beyond time – above any dimension we try to put Him in. He can enter and leave time whenever He wants. Paul writes to Titus speaking of the "hope of

eternal life ... promised before the beginning of time" (Titus 1:2). What? Before the beginning of time. How can that happen?

Humans are stuck with a limited understanding, an earth-bound perspective different to how God sees time. "Don't overlook the obvious here, friends. With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day" (2 Peter 3:8 MSG).

C.S. Lewis in *A Hideous Strength* writes about someone coming to faith. "The largest thing that had ever happened to her had "apparently" found room for itself in a moment of time, too short to be called time at all."¹³⁰

Kairos is beyond human comprehension. It can flicker for a second or last a thousand years. To borrow an image from Nicholas Carr in his book, *The Shallows*, we are like Jet Skiers bouncing across the water roaring to their next destination instead of deep-sea divers exploring the wonder below, going deep, discovering beauty.¹³¹

Kairos understands chronos, even smiles at it. Chronos, on the other hand, doesn't even want to understand kairos. It would only bring chaos!

Madeleine L'Engle writes:

That which time breaks through chronos with a shock of joy, that time we do not recognise while we are experiencing it, but only afterwards (we recognise it,) because kairos has nothing to do with chronological time. In kairos we are completely unselfconscious, and yet paradoxically far more real than we can ever be when we are constantly checking our watches for chronological time.¹³²

L'Engle references the play "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder, where Emily says to the stage manager, "Do any human beings ever realise life while they live it?" And he sighs and says, "No, except maybe the saints and poets. They do, some."¹³³

L'Engle notes:

The saint in contemplation lost (discovered) to self in the mind of God is in kairos. The artist at work is in kairos. The child at play, totally thrown outside himself in the game, be it building a sandcastle or making a daisy chain, is in kairos. In kairos we become what we are called to be as human beings, co-creators with God, touching on the wonder of creation. This calling should not be limited to artists – or saints.¹³⁴

Maybe you can recall a kairos moment for you, similar to Rohr's experience at the age of five:

I was alone in the living room of our home in Kansas and only the Christmas tree was lit. I had the sense that the world was good, I was good, and I was part of the good world—and I just wanted to stay there. It was like being taken to another world—the real world, where the foundation is love and God is in everything.¹³⁵

Mal showed me kairos. I remember an Easter mission where we were working together in a large school in Sydney. Mal was stuck in traffic as 700 boys were preparing to hear him speak. I was (understandably) chronos-driven, looking at my watch every few minutes trying not to panic as I desperately awaited his arrival.

When he arrived, he sauntered, it seemed, towards the large auditorium. He entered just as the singer finished, and he was introduced. It was seamless. Mal, somehow, incredibly, living in the moment, freed from the angst of being late, spoke life-giving words to the boys. I couldn't believe how he was able to manage his feeling world. That day I experienced a radical attitude to life – a kairos approach.

As I worked with Mal, I observed him over the years. He would leave everything to help someone who needed a hand. Like Jesus giving attention to the woman haemorrhaging, Mal lived in what the moment was asking of him, open to what the Father wanted. Like Mary, he was doing the *one thing necessary*.

CREATING KAIROS IN MENTORING

Mentoring is made up of moments, often in themselves very significant, that build on each other. It's like an emerging piece of a beautifully woven tapestry. As I mentor, I lock into their world, seeking to be present, so they feel seen and heard.

I watch a natural flow happening; we are present to each other. I'm wanting the very best for them. It needs time – time to sit in it, with it, to be unhurried. It's an opportunity to hear a mentee's story, to listen to where they are, to hear their spirit. With honesty and an alive spirit, intimacy builds. Mentees relax. A deeper fellowship unfolds.

There are times for mentees where suddenly, beautifully, a door of understanding opens. Life untangles. A way forward emerges. The Father is speaking. I watch in awe

I admire Elijah as he competes against the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18. He makes the sacrifice and waits (it must have felt a little scary) for the fire to fall. He did the work, built the sacrifice, and waited.

There are times with mentees when it takes a while to build the sacrifice. Week after week we wait for the fire. Our job is to hold on, do the work and be faithful. There are no guarantees. When the fire falls, it is a moment of history.

In mentoring, I come alongside to strengthen their spirit. As it expands, we move into another realm. I do all I can to not let chronos break in or take over. Can you recall being in kairos with a friend in a coffee shop and an over-enthusiastic waiter keeps returning to your table checking to see if you want to order anything?

There are times when whole new doorways of understanding open. There are moments when I know it is right to tell part of my story. I recall sharing the story of our son's death to a mentee. He later wrote to me:

I was moved when you revealed your story and your sadness so openly. It felt so raw, like the deepest part of you had been expressed for a moment. You take people into your heart. When it happens, my spirit rises and feels with you. It goes down really deep in me, man. It's just a privilege when you share.

Jesus is welcomed in the midst of this intimacy. There is room for Him. As I become freer in my mentoring, opportunities happen. We experience the mystery of kairos. I don't understand it, yet as Martin would say, it is *the mystery of a Divine encounter*.

Mystery is an intangible, a challenge to articulate. As we embrace mystery something beautiful emerges. In mentoring I encourage mentees to stay curious and give space to mystery.

Enjoy and admire the butterfly – don't try to dissect or explain it.

I keep repeating this profound truth– there is no formula, no set way of *doing* mentoring. The fact it happened a certain way last time, doesn't mean it will be duplicated.

Three hours can feel like ten minutes. As a mentee said, *In kairos, I can be me and you can be you. We hang out. There's space.*

In kairos I love more genuinely – somehow more of me – even all of me – is engaged. The cost to enter is dying to yourself. It's worth the sacrifice. Invite others in ... it's rarely just for you.

In kairos, it's possible to face things you have feared for years. Here is a freedom like no other.

In kairos you are alive. You know what you were made for. I use this quote from Howard Thurman often in my mentoring. "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive,

and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”¹³⁶

EXPERIENCING KAIROS OUTSIDE OF MENTORING TIMES

Kairos can take place anytime, anywhere – Japanese Hot Baths, McDonalds, weekends away, at work or on the sporting field.

Experiencing kairos with others is community at its richest. It invites them in. It’s an authentic fellowship. A mentee described kairos this way,

It’s like going to a best friend’s place for a sleepover. You go to bed, but you know you are going to talk. Comfortable under the blankets, your head relaxes on a soft pillow as you begin talking. Whether it is 10 minutes or all night you know you are in kairos.

A friend attended a birthday celebration for a mentee. He describes the experience:

I turned up, sat back, and observed. After a meal together we began affirming the birthday guy. I was amazed, I’d never experienced anything like this. It was natural, nothing forced. Words flowed smoothly. Spontaneously people described the guy’s heart. They spoke for as long they wanted to. It didn’t matter.

I was taken by the honesty and the depth they went to in describing him. I joined in and surprised myself with what I said. I remember thinking this is the space I want to create in my life for myself and others. I’ve never forgotten that evening. It grabbed my heart. My spirit clearly told me, “I want to do this.” Now I do this whenever we celebrate in our community—even now with my own family.

Justin Camp writes of how he experienced kairos:

I remember quite vividly one thing my dad would do in my anxious moments. He would lean in, catch my eye, and say, “You know this is all going to be okay, don’t you?” Those eleven words, in that divine order, were a tremendous gift—and one I needed desperately. My Father in Heaven knew I needed it, and those eleven words were actually His. He simply chose my dad as the person who could deliver them most credibly to my young heart. “You know this is all going to be okay, don’t you?”¹³⁷

For 10 years I was involved in running Pilgrimages. We would bring together pilgrims from around the world. The impact on each person was profound. One pilgrim captured their journey:

We chose vulnerability. Each one of us, silently, simultaneously. We decided to let the others know us for who we really were, and in our own ways, we opened the doors and let each other inside the walls that constantly stand guard around the city of our hearts.

In turn, we were rewarded with some of the truest friendships I’ve ever known. As a prize for the risk we took, we received a community of friends who were willing to be real and let others be real. We were willing to love each other to the best of their ability, despite our faults and messiness. It was one of the most beautiful things I’ve ever experienced.

The time reminded me of what I was made for. That piece of heaven that we held between us for three weeks was enough to make my heart miss that which it cannot fully experience in this world. I want to continue carrying the beauty created on our trip and integrate it into my everyday life.

Years on, whenever I'd see any of the pilgrims, we would look at each other, almost with disbelief, and ask, "What happened?" It was community at its best; the way life was meant to be. A pure, authentic fellowship. It was *kairos*. Our lives were changed. We tasted paradise and were homesick for more. Like the Magi did in the words of T.S. Eliot in *Journey of the Magi*, we were ... "No longer at ease here, in the old dispensation."¹³⁸

THE BEAUTY OF KAIROS

Kairos paints a picture, writes a poem. It is the poetry, the song, the magic bringing richness and beauty to our lives. I am thankful for the way Eugene Peterson translated the Bible into the Message translation. He sought to express the heart behind the words he was translating. As I read this about his funeral, I understood more where his translation was truly coming from:

At Peterson's funeral his son, Leif, talked about his dad. He explained at the service, his father had fooled everyone. Through all his many sermons and numerous books, he only actually ever had one message. And it was the same one he whispered over Leif at bedtime when he was a boy. "God loves you. He is on your side. He is coming after you. He is relentless."¹³⁹

I mentor an artist. Here he reflects on our times together:

Each time we meet for mentoring I experience kairos. I learn how big God's beauty is. It's beyond beautiful. I cry. I laugh. How can you God give me such beauty? When I am living in kairos, life is simpler, clearer. I get to be the original and purest version of me. I've discovered it's the fastest way to get to know myself and the Father. He's playful, His joy is big, so big. When I am with Him in kairos I glimpse what I don't understand. I know but I

don't know. It's beautiful and joyful and beyond our understanding. I'm walking on water.

Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes, "There's a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. He has made **everything beautiful in its time**. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:1 & 11, emphasis mine).

The Psalmist caught up in kairos beholds beauty, "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord" (Psalms 27:4).

God had a word for Zerubbabel. God's Spirit, not Zerubbabel's own strength, would make him succeed. God says to Zerubbabel, "You will rebuild the Temple, and as you put the last stone in place, the people will shout, 'Beautiful, beautiful!'" (Zechariah 4:6-7 GNT).

This is kairos. You see it, you're in it, you can't help but shout "Beautiful, beautiful!" Or as my mentee says, *It's beyond beautiful!*

REFLECTING ON TIME

You may have heard the expression, *Time heals all wounds*. That's not been my experience. I haven't discovered any magical healing power through chronos. Kairos is God's speed, God's time. Here time slows down or goes fast. It is time redeemed. In kairos, time and eternity blur together as heaven and earth meet.

Kairos is living in the now – it's always now. It's a discovery that everything is already prepared, as the prophet Isaiah says, "When the time is right ... I, the Lord, will make these things happen" (Isaiah 60:22).

In kairos God turns up ... right on time.

There's a phrase, "To know the time is to know the way." It's a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 8:5 – "Yes, there's a right time and way

for everything" (MSG). Another translation says, "The wise mind will know the time and the way" (NCB).

Be wise. Know your time. Know your way.

UNEXPECTED KAIROS

*Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life ...
Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace ... Keep
company with me ... live freely and lightly*

— Matthew 11:28-30 MSG

*From the days of John the Baptist until the present, the kingdom
from heaven has been forcefully advancing*

— Matthew 11:12 ISV

For a few months during the writing process, I was grappling with the question, “How do I finish this book?” My answer came a few weeks before my publisher’s deadline when I attended the wedding of a mentee here in Japan. I never expected what took place. I don’t think any of us did. The Father, in His kindness, turned up in a surprising way at the wedding feast. Those in attendance witnessed a miracle, not unlike that in Cana. As soon as the wedding was over, I knew how I could finish this book.

Let me introduce two Japanese friends, young men, warriors, samurais, and, in God’s kindness, my mentees.

Koji was the first Japanese guy I mentored. I met him as he was completing an internship at Disney in the United States. Lost in the wilderness of his university years, he says, “I left God like a prodigal son and escaped to the United States. However, God gently touched the son, who was going further and further away. I made the decision to walk in faith in God once again.”

He heard his spirit speaking. He was never the same again. He committed to mentoring, turned up each time, always with a passion to grow. He readily confessed his past, leaving everything behind. I recall one mentoring session that concluded in a McDonalds car park. He wept as he told me, “Marty, I’ll die to see Japan reached.” As we grew together, I was reminded of my relationship with Rod West. Like I looked to Rod, Koji would say to me, “Marty, I follow you as you follow Christ.”

Witnessing the change in his friend’s life, Shin sought me out. He asked if I could help him. I recall his words, “I’ve seen how much Koji has grown. I want to be like him. Can you mentor me?” We talked over what it would mean. From the start he took it seriously. His story was not simple. His father left when he was two. With no father in the home, it was often tough for his mother and his sister.

Each time we met, he would speak with an unabandoned honesty. He too faced his past and broke agreements. Everything was

brought into the light. His willing spirit spurred him to action. Every morning for thirty-three days we did our 33 Minute Warrior Bible Plan from YouVersion (refer Appendix 4). We would individually watch the video and read the verses at 6:30 am, and then at 6:50 am we talked about it and prayed. Shin didn't miss a day. He was committed. Our relationship grew. When he graduated from music school, Jenny and I travelled to Tokyo to see him perform. I was so proud of him. He later told me, "I felt so loved as you turned up and cheered me on."

Shin found in Koji a best friend and a running mate. They chose to hold nothing back from each other. Shin asked Koji if he could live with him in a community house near our church that's affectionately called "Holy Ghost House." Together, they would talk late into the night about God and their life.

Shin grew during our mentoring times. He is a unique character. He laughs a lot and is super relaxed. He quickly heard his spirit and grew in his relationship with the Father. He told me, *You took me on, helped me put God at the centre of our relationship. You saw me. I became more intentional about growing. I realised I had to pursue myself before I was ready to pursue a lady. I decided I would just say yes to growing.*

Increasingly he would speak of a lady at church he admired. They'd done a discipleship course together. The friendship was moving to another level. Shin's freed spirit reached out to Joy. I recall praying with Shin the day before he first asked her out. He took it all seriously. He asked if I would help him to do the work he needed to do if this relationship was going to work.

Eighteen months after they started dating, Koji, Shin and I went on a weekend trip to a lake at the foot of Mt Fuji. Shin was wrestling about his future with Joy. We prayed together that God would show Shin what was right. We ended up in the water. Shin went under, came up and exclaimed, "I am going to marry Joy!" We

celebrated over some pizza. The next evening, he took Joy out and asked her to marry him. He wasn't one for waiting!

We spoke often about growing up without a father. One day, unexpectedly his father contacted Shin after not seeing him for twenty-two years. Shin's grandfather was sick. He had asked Shin's dad if, before he died, he could meet his grandson. Shin flew up to the north of Japan with his guitar and visited the hospital. He met his grandfather and sang him songs he had written. It was profound for Shin to meet his grandfather before he passed away.

During mentoring times, we would speak of the impact on Shin not having a father. As Shin spent more time connecting with his earthly father and exploring in our mentoring the impact of not having a dad, something significant was being released in Shin—a deeper knowing of God as Father.

It helped too that Shin had a strong community around him; a band of brothers. They took him away on a bachelor's weekend three weeks before he got married. He told me "I could not have ever imagined what happened that weekend. We worshipped, the guys celebrated and affirmed me and told me that I was ready to get married. I felt loved by them and thankful for our community."

Shin fought for purity in his relationship. He wanted more than just a beautiful wedding. He wanted a lasting, real marriage. Before the men I mentor get married, I offer them the opportunity to talk over sex as God intended, sex beyond the honeymoon. Two nights before their wedding, Shin and I had that evening together. We celebrated that he was hours away from being married, that he had done the work. We spoke of the gift of sexuality. He asked questions. I recall it as a night of purity. It was beautiful, holy. Beyond any doubt he knew he was ready.

From the first moments of the wedding day God turned up. His Presence was overwhelming. It began with the ceremony. Shin was standing there, waiting. I could tell he was free. How do you capture the smile that broke over his face upon seeing Joy arrive?

People were cheering and aaahhing. Joy looked beautiful – inside and out. It seemed in a few moments the service was over. They held up the back of their hands to show us their new rings. How we cheered, even more than for their first kiss. Grace was overtaking everything.

We moved inside to the reception. Koji had been invited to be the MC. He was enjoying honouring his friend and his new wife. I was invited to make the toast. I shared two verses from Psalm 45 – a song composed to celebrate the King’s wedding. For Shin, it was verse 3 from the Message, “God has blessed you, blessed you so much. Strap your sword to your side, warrior!” I called him out to live this calling. It’s who Shin is. For Joy it was verse 10, “Now listen, daughter ... put your home behind you. Be here—the king is wild for you. Since he’s your Lord, adore him.” I explained it was not simply Shin who is wild for Joy, but her Heavenly Father cheering her on.

Then, it was time. I heard later that Shin whispered to his friend, “This is what I’ve been waiting for.” We all knew that Shin comes alive leading people in worship. It was the gift he could bring to the wedding, his moment to shine. He and Koji led us. People were taking photos, videoing the worship. Those who had never experienced worship were watching on, fascinated. Some were crying. I recall a moment watching Koji and Shin worshipping, both with their hands in the air. In the words of Wesley’s hymn, they were, “Lost in wonder, love, and praise.” Koji told me later that for him it was a glimpse of heaven, a Japanese expression of what it’s like when the Kingdom comes.

After worship, Shin’s sister, brother-in-law, niece and nephew sang for Shin and Joy. You could tell how much the children loved their uncle and new aunt. Shin’s sister spoke, crying her way through her words. “I made it to marriage and have a family because Shin was there for me. I recall how one day I was running

away from home. As I was running down the road, Shin ran after me, crying, begging me to return home.”

No one could guess what was about to take place. Shin had invited his father to the wedding. He chose to come. Joy met him for the first time two days before they married. Shin hadn’t planned to say anything at the reception but he knew his spirit wanted him to speak up. He spoke of the power of forgiveness. He turned to his father and said, “Dad, I don’t want to live a life of unforgiveness. I forgive you.”

Such power in those words. We watched, drawn into an intimate moment between father and son. His father reached out and hugged his son. He was crying. Around the room people were crying. Shin told me that as his father hugged him, he said, “Shin, I am so sorry I was not there for you. Please forgive me.”

Jenny, seated in the front row, caught the moment on camera. Behind father and son hugging was Joy wiping the tears from her eyes.

I caught up with Shin shortly after the speeches. We stood together in silence, in awe at the power of reconciliation. After a few moments he spoke up, “Marty, look at what is happening here. This is because you mentored me. You helped free me so I could be truly me today. Thank you.”

I asked others how the day had impacted them.

One told me, “The beauty of the day screams out. I want to live a life as sincerely as they do.” Another simply said, “I want to be like Shin.” I was sitting next to one of Shin’s friends at the reception. He was moved by what was taking place. He asked if he could keep talking to me about what he had seen. We met later that week. He chose to open up and reveal the good and the hard parts of his life. He’s decided to leave his previous life behind. Each day, he sends an update of how he is going at being a stronger man.

I continued to reflect on the beauty of the day. The Spirit falling, the Kingdom breaking in. There are times when you witness

breath-taking moments. This was one of them. I left quoting the words of a Psalm, which says “This is God’s work. We rub our eyes – we can hardly believe it! This is the very day God acted – let’s celebrate and be festive” (Psalms 118:23-24 MSG).

During the next few days, it struck me it wasn’t simply Shin’s life that came together at the wedding. I was watching most of the chapters of this book being acted out. I saw growth, mentoring, the power of confession, fighting the flesh, the power of gathering, fathering, the masculine journey, and kairos.

And it wasn’t just Shin who grew. In the weeks leading up to the wedding Joy spent time talking to me about how she had grown as she watched Shin change. Each family was affected by the growth in Shin and Joy’s lives.

On their wedding day we witnessed the power of forgiveness, a family reconciled.

Here was marriage as God designed it. The fruit of mentoring. The impact of a willing spirit.

SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

As a mentor I am always asking questions. Why not conclude *A Willing Spirit* with some questions?

- + Where are you?
- + What’s your story?
- + What is the job God has for you?
- + Where does mentoring fit in your life?
- + Are you willing to commit to a journey with mentoring?
- + Would you benefit by having a mentor?
- + Are you ready, praying perhaps for God to give you someone to mentor? Is there a Shin you could come alongside?

- ✦ Perhaps you have been mentoring for a while. What have you learnt from these pages that may help further your mentoring skills?

It's a rich experience being part of someone's life. I can joke that I have the best job in the world, then I realise it isn't a joke. I have the best job ...

Mentoring is life creating life. Free people freeing people. It's a life fulfilling the golden rule – love God and love others.

And, in it all, what helps us grow?

A willing spirit.

I leave you with two passages from Paul. Firstly, his words to the Ephesians:

I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us. (Ephesians 3:16-20 MSG)

And like Paul writing to Philemon, so I finish with his words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Philemon 1:25).

Appendix 1

VERSES ON THE HUMAN SPIRIT

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES

The Pentateuch

When he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived ... (Genesis 45:27)

Their spirit had been broken by their cruel slavery. (Exodus 6:9 GNV)

All whose hearts were stirred and whose spirits were moved came and brought their sacred offerings to the Lord. They brought all the materials needed for the Tabernacle, for the performance of its rituals, and for the sacred garments. (Exodus 35:21 NLT)

... my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly ... (Numbers 14:24)

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation. (Numbers 27:16 ESV)

The Historical Books

And the spirit of the king (David) longed to go out to Absalom, because he was comforted about Amnon, since he was dead. (2 Samuel 13:39 ESV)

Let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. (2 Kings 2:9 NKJV)

The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, “The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.” (2 Kings 2:15)

But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you?” (2 Kings 5:26)

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout his kingdom and also put it in writing. (Ezra 1:1)

The Wisdom Literature

You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit. (Job 10:12)

My spirit is broken, my days are cut short, the grave awaits me. (Job 17:1)

But it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding. (Job 32:8)

Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God. (Psalms 31:5)

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. (Psalms 32:2)

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalms 34:18)

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and give me a willing spirit, to sustain me ... My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

(Psalms 51:10-12 & 17, illustrates the difference between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit.)

I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart. Then my spirit made a diligent search. (Psalms 77:6 ESV)

When my spirit grows faint within me it is you who watches over my way. (Psalms 142:3)

When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. (Psalms 146:4)

A joyful heart makes a face cheerful, but a sad heart produces a broken spirit. (Proverbs 15:13)

Better to be lowly of spirit with the humble than to divide plunder with the proud. (Proverbs 16:19)

He who controls his temper is better than a war hero, he who rules his spirit better than he who captures a city. (Proverbs 16:32 CJB)

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones. (Proverbs 17:22)

The human spirit can endure in times of illness, but a crushed spirit who can bear? (Proverbs 18:14)

The human spirit is the lamp of the Lord that sheds light on one's inmost being. (Proverbs 20:27) ... The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts. (Proverbs 20:27 ESV) ... The Lord's light penetrates the human spirit, exposing every hidden motive. (Proverbs 20:27 NLT)

A sterling reputation is better than striking it rich; a gracious spirit is better than money in the bank. (Proverbs 22:1 MSG)

A man's pride shall bring him low: But honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. (Proverbs 29:23 KJV)

And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7 ESV)

The Prophets

A Message from the high and towering God, who lives in Eternity, whose name is Holy: "I live in the high and holy places, but also with the low-spirited, the spirit-crushed, And what I do is put new spirit in them, get them up and on their feet again." (Isaiah 57:15)

"Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the Lord. "These are the ones I look on with favour: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:26-27 ESV)

There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. (Daniel 5:11)

Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. (Daniel 6:3 ESV)

The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person, declares ..." (Zechariah 12:1)

So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. (Malachi 2:15 ESV) ... Therefore take heed to your spirit ... (Malachi 2:15 NKJV)

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

The Gospels

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 5:3 ESV)

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41)

And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation. (Mark 8:12 ESV)

... And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour ... (Luke 1:47)

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:80 ESV)

... they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. (Luke 8:53-55)

One day poor Lazarus died, and the angels of God came and escorted his spirit into paradise. (Luke 16:22 TPT)

If your spirit burns with light, fully illuminated with no trace of darkness, you will be a shining lamp, reflecting rays of truth by the way you live. (Luke 11:36 TPT)

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. (John 3:6) ... When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit. (John 3:6 MSG)

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. (John 6:63 ESV)

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. (John 11:33)

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.” (John 13:21)

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

The Acts of the Apostles

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59)

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. (Acts 17:16 ESV)

Paul purposed in the spirit ... to go to Jerusalem. (Acts 19:21 KJV)

Romans

God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ... (Romans 1:9)

God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son. (Romans 1:9)

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. (Romans 8:16) ... God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. (Romans 8:16 MSG)

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.
(Romans 12:11 ESV)

1 and 2 Corinthians

For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit? (1 Corinthians 4:21)

Whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:17)

But the one who joins himself to the Lord is mingled into one spirit with him. (1 Corinthians 6:17 TPT)

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. (1 Corinthians 14:14)

For they refreshed my spirit and yours. (1 Corinthians 16:18)

This is the reason we do not give up. Our human body is wearing out. But our spirits are getting stronger every day. (2 Corinthians 4:16 NLV)

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Paul's other Epistles

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen. (Galatians 6:18 ESV)

For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit. (Colossians 2:5)

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV)

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7 ESV)

The Lord is within your spirit and his grace overflows to you. (2 Timothy 4:22 TPT)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Philemon 1:25)

Other New Testament Passages

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

His Word can cut through our spirits and souls ... (Hebrews 4:12 CEV)

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. We should submit even more to the Father of our spirits and live, shouldn't we? (Hebrews 12:9 ISV)

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (James 2:26)

Let your true beauty come from your inner personality, not a focus on the external. For lasting beauty comes from a gentle and peaceful spirit ... (1 Peter 3:3-4, TPT)

Christ died once for our sins. An innocent person died for those who are guilty. Christ did this to bring you to God, when his body was put to death and his spirit was made alive. (1 Peter 3:18 CEV)

I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit. (3 John 1:2 NLT)

And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.” (Revelation 22:6 ESV)

INSIGHTFUL SPIRIT VERSES

John 4

There is a significant passage in John 4:23, when Jesus says:

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” (ESV)

Many commentators agree that the “spirit” being spoken of here is not the Holy Spirit but the human spirit. It is about how we worship – but also, the attitude of our heart. The Message translation captures the significance of the spirit in verse 23 and 24:

Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration. (John 4:23-24 MSG)

James 4:5

There is a challenging verse in James 4:5, where scholars are not in agreement at all. Some believe it’s one of the most difficult verses in the Bible. This is reflected in many translations. Some think it is

about the Holy Spirit (uppercase S), while others believe it is about the human spirit (lowercase s). I certainly can't be prescriptive of its meaning. Here are some translations:

He jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us ... (NIV)

Or what do you think the Scripture means when it says that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, watches over us with tender jealousy? (TLB)

... the spirit God has placed within us should be faithful to him. (NLT)

God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us. (NRSV)

Appendix 2

ONE YEAR MODEL OF MENTORING

This is an overview of a helpful plan from Tim Dyer for a long-term mentoring relationship. See: *The Johnmark Extension Mentor Equipping Course* <https://johnmark.net.au/mx/>

Sessions	Description
Phase: Introduction	
1	Informal meeting: An informal meeting with no commitments on either side to discuss the relationship and how it might work.
Phase: Formation	
1~4	<p>Life stories of both the mentee and the mentor: The mentoring relationship is built on trust created through the sharing of life stories. The mentee's story provides for deeper understanding of the individual to be mentored. It gives an indication of the key issues in the mentee's life. The level of vulnerability gives an indication of the desire of the mentee for growth, accountability, and development. The mentor's story creates the credibility to invest in the life of the mentee.</p> <p>Inventories: Some mentors like to work with a couple of simple inventories to understand their mentee's goals, personality, spiritual gifts, life experience, stress factors etc.</p> <p>Objectives: The objectives are developed from the mentee's issues, desires, roles, and goals. These are documented and become the basis of mentoring.</p> <p>Covenant: The covenant documents the commitment and expectations of mentoring by each party including time, availability, confidentiality, and accountability. It sets up how the mentoring relationship will be expressed in action.</p>
Phase: Mentoring	
6~12	<p>Support: The mentor nurtures the mentee through the stages of life and ministry development. At times of crisis the mentor might increase the amount of support in the relationship.</p> <p>Accountability: The mentor holds the mentee to account for commitments made.</p> <p>Development: Mentor and mentee journey together working on achieving the documented growth objectives. These include action steps and exercises to achieve the overall objectives. The mentor is committed to the development of the mentee in their life roles.</p> <p>Prayer: The mentor prays for the mentee.</p> <p>Networking: The mentor networks the mentee into new relationships, providing opportunities for growth.</p> <p>Resources: The mentor collects, develops, and prepares material for the mentee. The mentor provides the mentee with resources that encourage growth and development.</p> <p>Exercises: The mentor sets exercises for the mentee's reflection.</p>
Phase: Closure	
2~3	<p>Reflection and evaluation: There is a period of time in which both mentor and mentee evaluate the relationship based on the objectives and the covenant.</p> <p>Closure Celebration: If the relationship is to close, a careful symbolic process of giving thanks for the relationship is held.</p>

Appendix 3

A SIMPLE MENTORING PROCESS OVERVIEW

MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Setting the Environment

- ✦ Environment where mentees feel relaxed.
- ✦ Not rushed. Let it flow.
- ✦ Be warm, friendly, and non-judgmental.
- ✦ Use guideposts – not a strict formula.

Initial Conversation

- ✦ Tell me about yourself. (General background. What motivates you?)
- ✦ What are your strengths? (Both your gifts and your growing edges.)
- ✦ Tell me about your best friend, your spouse, your family.
- ✦ Tell me about your relationship to God. (How it really is, not how it ought to be.)

- Tell me about your ministry. (What is your vision? What enthuses you? Where are the challenges? How are you feeling about your ministry?)
- Do you want to grow? Why? Why not? How?

Going deeper

- What are some key turning points in your life so far?
- What are the top three challenges you are facing at the moment?
- What are your “big rocks” or priorities for this next season?

SUBSEQUENT MENTORING SESSIONS

As you gather together

- Ask questions about how their last week(s) have been.
- Then invite them to take the conversation where they want it to go saying: “The stage is now yours, go wherever you want, talk about what you like. It’s your time.”
- Listen – hear what is truly happening in their world.

Homework—things for the mentee to do between sessions

- **Journal:** doing this they will be empowered to do more of the work themselves.
- **Read different books:** often I suggest books that I believe will help them grow.
- **Be part of a small group:** they can share their world, pray and do life with others.

TOOLS FOR MENTORING

Depending on where the mentee wants to take the conversation, particularly in the subsequent sessions, these are tools that you may draw upon to serve your mentee.

Where are they

- ✦ Where are you?
- ✦ How are you and God going?
- ✦ What is life like for you on the inside?
- ✦ What would you like to explore today?

Exposing the Flesh

- ✦ Would you like to share (and celebrate) battles you are winning? And ones that are not simple at the moment?
- ✦ How are you going in the battle with your flesh?
- ✦ Tell me what you don't want to tell me? (use only if the relationship is strong)

Helping them hear their spirit

- ✦ What does your spirit long for more than anything else in the world?
- ✦ What does your spirit want to say to God?
- ✦ What is your spirit saying to you?
- ✦ How does your spirit feel?

Helping them hear from the Father

- ✦ What is God saying to your spirit now?

- ✦ For things to be different from now on, what do you need to do?

Their service and assignment

- ✦ Who are you serving, investing in, helping grow?
- ✦ What assignment are you sensing God is preparing for you?

Their accountability and running mates

- ✦ How does accountability work best for you?
- ✦ Who are you sharing life with?
- ✦ Have you got a running mate who knows what life is like for you on the inside?

Appendix 4

RESOURCES TO USE TOGETHER

What is out there that helps in this battle? What challenges can be done together? Here are several resources I use.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE AND MISSION

A lot of the basis for this book has come from the Foundations for Life and Mission course. I don't know of any training that more effectively equips people in living with God, living with others, living with yourself, and for following your calling.

Done as a one-week intensive, or over 12 weeks, it creates a setting for participants to:

- ✦ Grow in a free and loving relationship with Jesus through a deep engagement with the word of God.
- ✦ Come to a deeper understanding of mission, and the plan God has for your life.
- ✦ Grow in awareness of some of the interwoven dynamics of our humanity, including how aspects of this can liberate you or hold you back in life and mission.
- ✦ Develop practical skills, knowledge and awareness that will serve you in being more effective for God's Kingdom in the community that He is calling you to.

Foundations courses are held all over the world. For information about courses near you, or to organise a course in your area, visit www.thefoundationscourse.org

BIBLE PLANS AND CHALLENGES

The 33 Minute Warrior – (for men) A friend in Japan and I, developed this discipleship program that thousands have completed online and as a YouVersion Bible app reading plan: www.33minute.com or <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/21955-33-day-mens-challenge>

The 55 Day Pure Heart Challenge – (for ladies) A friend in Japan developed this, and it changed the life of a mentee's girlfriend who did it: <https://onfire.jp/en/55daychallenge/>

Exodus 90 – Catholic men put this 90-day challenge together that addresses addictive behaviour head-on through devotion, disciplines, and brotherhood: www.exodus90.com

Freedom 40 – This is a shorter version of Exodus 90, seeking to help men help one another through a short-term, intense challenge: <https://onfire.jp/en/freedom40/>

Bible Reading – As a friend says regarding Bible plans and different programs, the best one is the one you use! The simplest – and possibly most profound – is actively reading the Bible together and listening to God as friends, couples, or small groups – online or in person. Bible app Bible Plans can be a good way of motivating this.

INTERNET FILTERS

Many guys I mentor are committed to Covenant Eyes (<https://www.covenanteyes.com>) a subscription software that monitors what you're watching online, including your phone. One mentee wrote:

RESOURCES TO USE TOGETHER

"I'm not going to listen to the other voices, but I need training wheels right now. So that is why I want to have Covenant Eyes. I need accountability."

I figured, if I am challenging the guys I mentor to use it then it would be helpful accountability for me. My wife gets a report each week.

If you believe an internet filter would serve you then sign up; however, at the same time remember that, as helpful as they may be:

The sobering reality about pornography is that our sin emerges not in front of us, but from within us. The images and videos awaken and encourage the suicidal hungers already there. That means we can download any software, apply any filter, discard any device or screen, and still not break free ... Conquering sexual sin will always take more than internet filters and accountability reports.¹

INITIATION CAMPS

We have called our men's camps, "Warrior Training Weekends" or "Welcome to Manhood" camps. There is something incredibly significant about a group of 6 to 8 brothers coming together for a few days, for the express purpose of challenging each other, getting free and growing. At many of these weekends there is an initiation of a younger guy into manhood. These are extremely simple, easily arranged and life-changing. Ideas can be found online: <http://www.33minute.com/2020/07/warrior-training-weekends-english.html>

¹ (Marshall Segal, The Forgotten Book for Sexual Purity, (August 20, 2020) <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-forgotten-book-for-sexual-purity>)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In her acceptance speech at the 1982 Oscars, Maureen Stapleton said, “I want to thank ... everybody I ever met in my entire life!” I get it. I’m there. I’ve had a lot of help; some heavenly and some a little closer to earth.

I begin with my earthly helpers ... and there are a few of them. It is quite a large tribe. So many have shaped me over many years.

Firstly, my family. I wish mum and dad were still around to witness this. They would be so proud. I am grateful for all they did to set me up. I was loved. My sister always has been encouraging. If people comment on my enthusiasm, I say then meet my sister! We’ve been through a lot together. I watch how happy you are being married to Peter. We’re family; we stick together. To my niece and nephew, Edward and Lizzie (and their amazing partners Annie and Matt.) How good to be part of your life from the beginning. Those Christmas concerts run by your enthusiastic uncle have now become the “traditional” Christmas concert, and, best of all, your kids are now the stars!

Not everyone has the privilege of a “second” mum but I do. Mary Lane, a matriarch with her 63 grandchildren and great grandchildren. You played such a formative role in my life. Talking, around the kitchen table on changing the world impacted me. With so many birthdays to remember, you never forget mine.

Adrian and Don, our high school years and finding faith together with many others, were some of my greatest moments. We even shared our 21st birthday party together. There was Haso,

still hanging around even when I became your “religious” friend. I’m thankful for the others in my year in our boarding house who, when I won the Good Samaritan prize, threw me on their shoulders and ran around the school grounds.

Macquarie University in Sydney were unforgettable days that have resulted in life-long friendships. Swanny and Neil – living in community with you in a house, about to be demolished, gave me a taste of the community I want to keep striving for. Fran and Stephen, loyal friends, who’ve believed and stood with us, since the beginning. Ian and Jane, you have been so generous in supporting us and taking us on holidays with you. You introduced us to your friends, Joy and Wolfgang, and Christine and Brian who now make up our Croydon support crew. Helen and Marty, your faith and friendship inspired me especially as I watched you build community at your home and bring up four amazing kids. I knew that when I got married, I wanted you, Marty, to stand alongside me.

I am thankful for the privilege of being a godfather to a number of godsons over many years. One godson has my name. Marty, every year I look forward to our day together. It’s amazing what you have done – Chaplain and now school principal. Good work mate.

A formative, training/preparation time was teaching for five years at Coleambally Central School in rural Australia. I was trusted with responsibility far beyond my years. I juggled a role as youth worker and teacher becoming friends with a number of students, especially through producing school plays and running the youth group. I learnt a lot about mentoring as I played a role as an informal school counsellor. Spending time every Friday night talking with local farmers in the pub sure helped my listening skills. Marg, you always had an open heart and an open door. Andrea and Stephen, we went through a lot together; through it all we became life-long friends. Finally, Onion and Stephen, two students who saved my life when I got caught in turbulent water. I recall

you resuscitating me and hearing your plea, “Please don’t die, Mr Woods. If you die, who will run the youth group?” I am glad you won a medal for your bravery.

After six years of teaching, I joined Fusion Australia. It became my family – amazing, committed people willing to take whatever initiatives necessary to see the Kingdom come. It’s been my spiritual home for 35+ years. Marches, Stadium events, Community Festivals, working on homeless and unemployment programs, training weekends – anything that would bring the Aussie Church together and be at the heart of communities.

The last twenty years Jenny and I have been overseas building growing and expanding what I learnt in Australia from Fusion. Tim, Dan and Danni – what a privilege working with you in those early days growing Fusion Youth and Community in the UK. We may have been living and travelling around Europe but we always enjoyed coming “home.”

Living in Greece, Kostas, you looked after us so well, including getting us addicted to Gyros! Timon in Germany thanks for inviting us to be part of the adventure of reaching out to the community. Martin and Silvia, you believed and stood with our crazy dream for an Academy. I was moved when you told me it was one of the best things you ever did even when it didn’t work out as we all had hoped. It was hard – thanks for putting your lives on the line.

Thanks to all those in London and Paris who made our life so rich as we worked together in running Community Festivals and community transformation. I’m so thankful for how a French team has come together and is still growing across France. Moving to Japan five years ago has led to some of our richest and most rewarding life experiences. We feel like you have taken us into your heart. When our senior Pastor told me, “Marty I don’t know what you do but keep going,” I knew we were in the right church. With Community Festivals around the Olympics and Sports Ministry not possible due to Covid-19, suddenly there was more

time for mentoring and writing. Most Friday and Saturdays I was in Yokohama Central Library frustrating the Security men as they reminded me to wear my mask.

I am thankful for the Sports movement; my other family. You inspire me with your kingdom approach to everything. I am always learning how you do everything “open source.” It was part of why I wanted to make this book available freely. Thanks for believing in our dream of growing “Open Crowd” Community Festivals globally. David, I learn so much working alongside you.

There are many others who’ve supported, cheered and prayed for me to get this book over the line. Thanks to each of you even though I haven’t highlighted your name. So many have supported us financially and in prayer in our years with Fusion. If you weren’t standing alongside us, we simply would not have made it. A special thanks to the parents of a mentee, who when they heard I wanted to make the book available online for free, decided to cover the costs in getting it ready for publishing.

There would be no mentoring book without mentees. I am grateful for each one of you. Thanks for your commitment to the mentoring process and for your willingness to overlook my shortcomings. I’m especially thankful for all the Japanese guys I mentor—trusting a Gaijin (outsider) has given me insight and depth into the world of a Japanese man.

There is an amazing diversity of mentees from over 30 countries. The American contingent have come mostly through my friendship with a longstanding friend, Mark who is the Missions coordinator at a Florida Christian University.

Thank you to all those who contributed their stories here ... Takato, Brett, Jordan, Joe, Frithjof, Rick, Michael, Kostas, Nathan, Daniel, Stracho, Nick, Taylor, Shin, Koji, Johnny, Pablo, Levi, KK, Tom, Roy, Gilly, Masashi, Ryan, Tim and Tim, Ben, Hammy, Makoto, Masa, Peter, Brandon, Bira, Leon, Fred, Jouni, Kor, Jonathan, David, Pilly, Matt, Yuki, Senzo, Doyle, James,

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Three retreat venues have given me space to write. Joy thanks for loaning us your rustic cottage in a French village. Poatina, the village that Fusion owns in Tasmania, cared for me as I wrote. These last 12 months “Send International” provided a chalet at Lake Yamanakako at the foot of Mt Fuji. Janet, you were always very kind and welcoming.

Johannes and Jouni – some of the best things I’ve ever done have been working alongside you with those early Men’s Initiation weekends in the French Alps and the Finnish wilderness. Thanks to Jef, my New Zealand missionary mate. I am inspired by your fierce commitment to reaching Japanese men. I’m looking forward to running mentoring training across Japan. Speaking of running ... Glenn my running mate, I’m incredibly thankful how you hold me to account. I’m glad you are in my life. Baptising you in the ocean, after you decided to give your life to God, was pretty unforgettable ... and I get to mentor two of your sons.

Colin and Melissa constantly encouraging, constantly believing in what we do. You've been there in hard and good times. Hugh and Julie, Mark and Di—teaching and ministry friends -thanks for your interest and love. Rod and Sal—soul mates through the sadness of our each losing a child. We enjoy any moment we can get with you. Peter Wells, thanks for your friendship and your generosity over so many years. You are the most courageous man I know. Dave and Sal, I am thankful for how we have laughed and grown together. Thanks to the Foundations Discipleship course team who have been more than willing for me to use material from the course. This book is “applied” Foundations. The course totally changed my life and my mentoring.

Janet, my mentor Rod's wife, and their four children shared their husband and dad with me and countless others. Thank you. It is a joy and a privilege that, Janet and Julia, will launch this book in Australia at my old school where I first began mentoring fifty years ago. That's crazy!

Paul Mallison, son of John; thanks for giving to the world the gift of your dad's mentoring book available for free online on our website. He was a remarkably gentle, wise and gifted leader. I am thankful I knew him and was taught by him.

To four spiritual sons; Joe, Strahinja, Daniel and Koji. Each of you have what it takes. What a privilege to have been part of helping three of you prepare for your marriage and been part of your wedding services. You are growing into strong men. Koji, I've never known a Timothy quite like you. It is a wild ride we are on. Paul writes, “O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you (1 Timothy 6:20 ESV).

Bira, I still find it hard to take in that you and Triscia left everything in Brazil to come and work with us in Japan. I am thankful to be able to pass on the mantle to you. Having you around makes life an adventure. You bring the best of Brazil and the best of the Kingdom to everything.

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This book has been my passion, its truths have consumed me. Yet it’s only turned out this way because of the Heavenly support I have received. It’s you Father, Son and Holy Spirit who I am most thankful for.

God, you did this. Often as I’d run each day, you would speak and tell me what to write. Sometimes it felt like a download. You are a good Father. I love being Your son. You carried me through days, near the end, with little sleep from my side. As I sent off the first draft I recall, after an all-nighter, turning in for bed at 6.30 am. I lay there sobbing. Tears of deep thankfulness. I am overwhelmed by your faithfulness.

I keep telling You all the time Jesus, “You’re the One who set my spirit free.” Jesus, You are my friend, the big brother I always wanted, my strength, my hope. Nothing can capture my gratefulness for what you’ve done for me. I love you. I worship you.

Holy Spirit, you are the One who meets with my spirit to remind me who I am and helps me call God, “Father.” You are so

A WILLING SPIRIT

patient. My spirit is grateful beyond any words for your working in my life. Take more of me over.

I finish with the most thankful heart anyone could have.

I am undone.

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).

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