

**“Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life” Interaction**

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## **Connecting Interaction**

### **Point #1. Mentoring Shares Resources**

In the preface and in chapter one, Stanley and Clinton (1992) repeatedly describe mentoring as sharing resources. They define mentoring as, “a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources” (p. 12). The authors state, “Mentoring is as old as civilization itself. Through this natural relational process, experience and values pass from one generation to another” (p. 17). Society advances on the achievements of one generation to the next, at least in part, through mentoring.

### **Interaction with Point #1**

I identify strongly with this point. Campus ministry is, at its core, the exchange of information and resources to the next generation. Student leaders consume and internalize the knowledge and experiences of the previous generation through mentoring. Stanley and Clinton (1992) give encouragement to potential mentors. “You don’t need to know ‘all the answers’ or assume a teaching role to be a blessing to a mentoree. Listening, affirming, suggesting, sharing experiences, and praying together are invaluable contributions” (pp. 24-25). The authors lower the bar for mentoring to a level most people could meet. In fact, they make a startling claim that any person has the potential to be a mentor. “Anyone can mentor, provided he has learned something from God and is willing to share with others what he has learned” (pp. 28-29). I appreciate the authors’ perspectives since it opens the pool of potential mentors to anyone on a staff team, not just the experienced veterans.

### **Point #2. A Generation Needs Mentoring**

Stanley and Clinton (1992) highlight the desperate need of the newest generation of leaders for mentoring. Addressing the popularity of mentoring, the authors state, “It also speaks

of the tremendous relational vacuum in an individualistic society and its accompanying lack of accountability” (p. 36). They continue addressing the inbuilt weakness of individualism:

“Americans cling to personal independence when they desperately need interdependence. But God did not create people to be self-sufficient and move through life alone” (pp. 36-37).

### **Interaction with Point #2**

I wholeheartedly agree with the authors on the pressing need for mentoring in this latest generation. Stanley and Clinton (1992) wrote to a generation almost 30 years past, and the “relational vacuum” has grown significantly. A generation of digital natives feels connected through social media and other electronic platforms but are, in the physical world, more disconnected and isolated than ever. Virtual relationships offer no true accountability since the image displayed on the screen is thoroughly curated. No bad pictures are shown, except when making a point or garnering sympathy. Accountability only exists in honest relationships. The curated digital relationship is fundamentally a dishonest relationship. Intentional mentoring by caring leaders provides the accountability and interdependence this generation needs.

### **Point #3. Discipling is Intensive Mentoring**

The authors assert that discipling is the most intensive forms of mentoring. They describe discipling as “a relational process in which a more experienced follower of Christ shares with a new believer the commitment, understanding, and basic skills necessary to know and obey Jesus Christ as Lord” (p. 48). Stanley and Clinton (1992) later compare discipling with the training available in the trade industry. The intensive input of the mentor “bears a close similarity to apprenticeship relations as found in the skilled labor fields of masons, electricians, and plumbers” (pp. 53-54).

### **Interaction with Point #3**

I experience intensive discipleship weekly. I am responsible to mentor three young men in their walk with Jesus. Two are student leaders and one is a staff pastor. In our mentoring sessions we dive deep into foundational truths and how to apply them. Stanley and Clinton (1992) describe the results of intensive mentoring.

At the heart of discipleship lies the concept of the centrality and lordship of Christ in believers' lives. Believers usually progress in understanding and appropriating Christ in their lives – Christ as Savior, Christ as Lord, Christ as strength, Christ as life. Early discipleship efforts focus on personally knowing and experiencing Christ (p. 51).

Christ is appropriated from one life to another. The veteran leader models and teaches Christ to the younger leader through intensive mentoring. The process is labor and time intensive and is essential to making disciples.

#### **Point #4. Spiritual Guides Catalyze**

Stanley and Clinton (1992) assert in chapter four that an essential form of mentoring is the Spiritual Guide (pp. 61-72). These guides appear sporadically and catalyze spiritual growth. They indicate the occasional nature of these guides, saying “You will usually need to be disciplined only once in a lifetime. ...However, from time to time throughout your growth in Christ you will need a Spiritual Guide” (p. 66). They emphasize the catalytic nature of these guides, saying “a Spiritual Guide facilitates spiritual development and maturity at certain critical junctures in a disciple’s life” (p. 65).

#### **Interaction with Point #4**

I have experienced this truth on several occasions. At a critical juncture in ministry when I was grappling with how to effectively build small groups, I met a Spiritual Guide. Seven years ago, I met Eli Gautreaux, a campus pastor with Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship at Sam Houston

State University in Huntsville, Texas. He built the ministry to over 1,000 students through the guidance of the Holy Spirit over a 15-year span. I am the Arizona District Chi Alpha representative and have the responsibility of bringing training to our district Chi Alpha staff, so I arranged for Gautreaux to come provide training. His teaching and vision changed my outlook on ministry. The following spring my wife and I visited his campus to watch and learn and take notes. Gautreaux was a timely Spiritual Guide who has remained a friend and mentor.

#### **Point #5. Sponsors Lift Others**

In chapter eight, Stanley and Clinton (1992) illustrate the importance of Sponsor-mentor in helping young leaders rise. They declare “the Sponsor’s central thrust is providing career guidance and protection as a leader moves within an organization” (p. 117). Without Sponsor-mentors rising leaders may struggle or drift from the organization. The authors specify that many Christian organizations lose leaders. “Some of their finest potential leaders frequently leave an organization before they develop into effective leaders” (p. 122).

#### **Interaction with Point #5**

I strongly agree with the authors on the important role of Sponsor-mentors in retaining and raising up leaders. I often serve as a Sponsor-mentor for new campus ministers at district functions. I make introductions and help rising leaders form larger networks. Occasionally I protect new ministers when a misperception or rumor about them circulates. The authors described one Sponsor-mentor’s actions: “He protected. He opened doors. He opened up the possibility of a new career track” (p. 122). As a Sponsor-mentor I bridge the organization and the new leader by removing roadblocks and opening doors.

#### **Point #6. Peer Co-mentors are essential**

In chapter twelve, Stanley and Clinton (1992) insist that peer co-mentors are essential to finish well. They list five common pivotal points that derail leaders: sexual relationships, power, pride, family, and attitude toward and use of money (p. 193). They posit that peer co-mentors can provide accountability and help leaders finish well. “Leaders need peer mentors. One reason for much of the failure in Christian leadership stems from the lack of intimate friendships with peers” (p. 194).

### **Interaction with Point #6**

I agree with Stanley and Clintons’ (1992) assertion that peer co-mentors are necessary to keep veteran leaders on track. Temptations do not grow less with age and experience. Scripture does not promise a removal of temptation, but rather a path out of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). The authors state: “Today’s success-oriented, individualistic society discourages those close relationships that you need in order to grow. The higher a leader rises, often the harder it is to find co-mentoring” (p. 195). As a 22-year veteran campus pastor, it is crucial that I have outside eyes on my life to avoid the pitfalls described by the authors. My local church pastor provides a peer co-mentor relationship with consistent eyes on my life. We have similar time-in-ministry experience, so we can focus on “relationship, not on a need-centered function” (p. 192).

### **Personal Interaction with the Video on Influence**

#### **Point #1. Care**

Dr. Blakney strongly asserted that to connect with people, they must know we care.

#### **Interaction with point #1**

I agree with Dr Blakney on the crucial nature of caring for others. No one wants to be a project, but everyone wants to have friends. An old truism says, “People don’t care what you know until they know that you care.”

**Point #2. Active Listening**

Dr. Blakney stressed the importance of active listening when connecting. Good eye contact and full focus tell a person that you are listening.

**Interaction with Point #2**

I agree with Dr. Blakney's assessment on the importance of actively listening in conversations. I have been on the receiving end of conversations where the other person was looking over my shoulder constantly, as if looking for the person they would rather be talking with. I did not feel valued or cared for. I am careful at events like our Network Conference to give younger ministers my full attention when talking amid the sea of people. I want them to feel valued and honored.

**Point #3. Listen to the end**

Dr. Blakney emphasized the importance of listening thoroughly, not just long enough to formulate a response. He cautioned against talking faster than thinking.

**Interaction with Point #3**

I completely agree with Dr. Blakney on this point, but it requires conscious effort in practical application. While listening, thoughts often come to mind that relate to the topic. I try to file those away until the speaker has finished, while staying engaged in the remainder of the conversation. The greatest challenge to listening to the end is the person who talks with no pauses for several minutes. Often, by the time there is a break in conversation, the point that seemed relevant has long passed from significance.

**Point #4. Seek a response**

Dr. Blakney encouraged seeking a response from the person to determine if they heard and understood what was said. Further, he recommended encouraging the other person to formulate a plan to act on the conversation.

#### **Interaction with Point #4**

I agree with Dr. Blakney on this point with reservations. When conversation becomes meaningful and significant then I would encourage plans and actionable steps. If, however, the conversation was light and brief, I would typically not encourage action steps or plans. I appreciate the intentionality of Dr. Blakney's suggestion. Once I ask a person for actionable points, an accountable relationship is developed, and the person is more likely to act.

I, Ryan A. Ribelin, have read 100% of the book.