

Sample Mentoring Conversation

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Jethro & Moses

When mentoring is less structured and more natural, the mentor may be unsure how to guide a meeting. What does a profitable conversation look like, and how can a mentor make this happen?

As we follow the story of God's people in Exodus, we happen upon a natural mentoring meeting that provides a simple framework for conversation between a mentor and mentee. Moses' father-in-law Jethro stops by while Israel is camped at Mt. Sinai (Ex 18). Here are a few things we can learn as we listen to this older and younger man talk:

First, frame the discussion around the mentee's interests. After a hearty greeting, it seems the discussion centered on Moses' life (v. 7-9). Moses wanted to talk about the intense and tumultuous events that took place during the previous year. Begin your conversation by discovering what events, themes, or ideas your mentee wants to discuss.

Second, listen without interruption. Moses told his father-in-law about *all* that God did to Pharaoh, and *all* the hardships they had endured, and how God delivered them (v. 8). Jethro listened patiently to it all. It's important a mentor listen carefully to a mentee's situation or ideas without interruption. As you listen, be alert for several things: unbiblical thinking, hurts, a sinful or unwise habit, a similar experience in your own life, a potential growth area, biblical truth you can share, the leading of the Holy Spirit. The mentor may need to ask questions for clarification, but should otherwise just listen.

Third, offer encouragement. After hearing Moses' story, Jethro rejoiced in what God was doing for Moses and the people (v. 9). As you listen to your mentee, be alert for how God is working in this life. Point this out, and let the mentee know you believe in him/her. Most mentees long to hear affirmation and encouragement from their mentor.

Fourth, ask good questions. After observing Moses' approach to judging the people, Jethro asked Moses to explain why he used this approach (v. 14). If you observe something that concerns you, ask your mentee to explain their thinking or actions. Explore the pros and cons of their perspective together. Compare it to what the Bible says.

Fifth, think through a way to help your mentee grow in Christlikeness. Jethro suggested Moses delegate some of his responsibility to avoid burn out. As you listen and the conversation unfolds, you'll probably have some idea of how to help your mentee. If you've experienced something similar, tell your story. Ask if your mentee would like to hear your observations and suggestions. Most mentees are wide open to a mentor's influence if they feel heard and supported.