

SOMEONE *to* WALK WITH

A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN MENTORING

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Darcy Paape

*This book is dedicated to Pastor James Pingel Sr.
Thank you for patiently walking with me, guiding
me into a vocation in ministry, and consistently cheering
me on from the sidelines.
Your little bit has made all the difference.*



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Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting beside the well. (John 4:6)

We carry around excuses about why this may not be the time to get involved in the life of another. John 4 tells the story of Jesus taking time to connect with the woman at the well. We will look at other biblical characters who had valid reasons not to get involved in God’s plan, but whom God used anyway.

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A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” (John 4:7)

We live in a paradoxical time. We desire to be known and to belong, and at the same time we fear being exposed. Look at how Jesus engaged the woman at the well with a purposeful request. Authentic listening can prevent misunderstandings, but it takes practice and intentionality. Learn authentic listening techniques to practice, and learn how helpful it can be in relationships.

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[Jesus said,] “If you knew the gift of God, . . . you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” (John 4:10)

Christian mentoring begins out of love for God and the God-given desire to connect with others. Being open with another is risky, but less so when we learn to trust. Here we explore truths in Scripture that give us confidence to risk reaching out and being vulnerable, and we consider how love is the driving factor as we pursue lasting and genuine connections with others.

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered Him, “I have no husband.” (John 4:15–17)

Authentic relationships give permission to be messy but not to stay messy. It is important to create an atmosphere where people look to Scripture to hold one another accountable to both the promises and the calling God gives. This process involves confessing sins, repenting, receiving forgiveness from one another, and hearing the words of reconciliation spoken over you, not just in church but in real relationship with one another.

[The woman said,] “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you [Jews] say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” (John 4:20)

Living in a sinful world means we can never escape conflict fully, so if we want to be in relationship with one another, we need to be willing to deal with conflict. This doesn’t mean getting better at winning, but practicing gently restoring one another to relationship. It is not enough to say, “I am not good at dealing with conflict.” We are called to practice and get better. Addressing it in your own life is the best way to learn to help someone else address it in hers.

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So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” They went out of the town and were coming to Him. (John 4:28–30)

How can we equip women to tell their stories of faith? To come and see what the Lord has done? We need to learn the art of storytelling. We all have moments in our life when God met us in a struggle and helped us get through. God is the central character of our stories, but our perspective can be a powerful way “to stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). Learn practical ways to identify the God-moments in your own life and tell them to others.

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[Jesus said,] “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.” (John 4:35)

Scripture gives us some great examples of intergenerational mentoring, including Naomi and Ruth and Elizabeth and Mary. It also reminds us to continue to pursue the disconnected, especially those who grieve, are homebound, or deal with circumstances that isolate them. This chapter will share tips to adapt existing ministries to mentoring and list Scripture passages as starting points for mentors.

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PROLOGUE

Think of a quiet day, the wrong kind of quiet. It is a day full of unspoken needs. A woman walks to the well alone. This Samaritan woman is thirsty.

Think of footsteps, a single set in the middle of the day. One step follows another on the dusty ground. So still stands the town that the only noise is the woman walking. It is a quiet day, but not a normal day. There is a man at the well. Midday is usually a time she can avoid the others. But today, a Jewish rabbi sits ready.

“Give Me a drink” (John 4:7). The man speaks; the silence is broken. Actually, how would you like some living water? He takes time to speak to her need, quench her longing, and share her burden. Turning to run into town, this woman is no longer silent. “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did!

Can this be the Christ?” (John 4:29).

Think of a quiet day, the wrong kind of quiet. It is a day full of unspoken needs. There is a need, a fear, a single set of footsteps. This woman is thirsty.

She slips into the back of the church quietly. She hopes to sit unnoticed, and yet, inwardly, she hopes to be noticed. She wishes to listen and then slip out, quickly, silently, and be on her way. But this is no ordinary day. Someone has been paying attention.

“Why, hello,” a church member speaks, breaking the silence. “Might I sit with you awhile? Can I share with you about Living Water?” In that space a need is met, a longing filled, and a burden shared. “Come and see,” the visitor shares with her family.

“Could they possibly know the Savior?”

INTRODUCTION

The story of the woman at the well is as relevant today as it was more than two thousand years ago. There are many people like her around us: people who can relate to the single set of footprints on dusty ground. They may be surrounded by others and yet feel completely alone. Maybe we are like her ourselves.

The Samaritan woman's story is of one who is disconnected from her community but who, with the right encouragement and instruction, reconnects in a powerful way. It is important to note that the woman did not get there on her own. On an ordinary day at the well in Samaria, she encountered a man who changed both her perspective and her life's trajectory. That Man was Jesus. He broke down multiple societal barriers by going out of His way to approach her and begin a life-altering conversation. Samaritans and Jews did not associate with one another; men did not speak to women without their husbands present; a woman with a questionable reputation was not to be approached at all. Jesus connected with her anyway.

In our increasingly divisive culture, this story provides an important reminder. The Church cannot expect the lost to come to our doorstep; there are too many other options. We must go to them. But what can church members offer the lost? It seems harder and harder to have a conversation with friends, let alone new acquaintances, because so many topics are divisive or because the Bible is no longer viewed as authoritative. The Church offers love and meaningful connection, which we as church members desire as well. We want someone to walk with through the highs and the lows, a friend who will help us stay anchored to the things that matter and avoid the ones that do not. In other words, we're looking for a mentoring relationship. Mentorship starts by connecting with people and leads to connecting them to Jesus and the redemption possible only through His death and resurrection.

Some of the work of connecting to the disconnected can be done within our own church walls: the disenfranchised in our midst, youth too busy to make it to youth group, the elderly and homebound, or the working mother unable to make it to afternoon moms' Bible study. Our ministries can create opportunities for church members to connect on deeper levels, beyond the greeting on Sunday morning or polite conversation during a church dinner. We can intentionally provide intergenerational mentoring relationships that support others through prayer, biblical instruction, encouragement, and accountability.

Intergenerational mentoring is defined as mutual sharing, guiding, and instructing between the generations, not just older-to-younger but younger-to-older as well. In other words, mentoring is provided by both parties in the relationship. Each generation and every individual has unique talents and perspectives that can help to inform the other's opportunities and challenges. A younger mentee might provide perspective for a mother of teenagers, and a recent empty-nester might provide a home away from home for a visiting college student.

At times, the older partner might be the instructor, providing biblical anchors, wisdom, and experience. At other times, the younger might provide hope and insight on how to navigate the ever-changing modern landscape without compromising biblical truth. Both generations have an important role in influencing the other.

A similar give-and-take is present in the example of the Samaritan woman and Jesus. Jesus shared important truth about a changing spiritual landscape. He is the Christ; He offered her living water. The woman wrestled with this truth, but in the end she played a significant role in bringing in the harvest by inviting her fellow Samaritans to "come and see" (see John 4:29). This mutual participation is important, especially for our young adults and teenagers. They need opportunities to contribute as well as to be taught. It also takes a weight off of older mentors, who fear that they might not have all the answers.

Mentoring in the local congregation provides opportunities for the people of God to wrestle with the truth of Scripture, practice loving one another, and figure out life side by side. As Matthew 22:37–38 says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself.”

We acknowledge that loving our neighbor takes work. Connections take time to form, especially if we want those connections to go beyond casual greetings to intentional mentoring. Those connections lead to opportunities for needs to be expressed and for church members to serve one another. By creating healthy, thriving mentoring communities in our own congregation, we can better serve and love our neighbor. An environment that fosters healthy mentoring relationships

- involves creating a community that listens;
- connects deeply;
- forgives and is forgiven;
- is committed to one another;
- tells the story; and
- pursues the disconnected.

First, Christian mentoring means recognizing that this work is meant for each member of the congregation as part of our calling as the Body of Christ. Hebrews 10:23–25 says:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

It also means learning how to listen to one another, not to defend or argue our point, but to understand, because understanding is an important practice for those of us who wish to love our neighbor. Understanding does

not mean agreeing; it means seeing the point from the other person's perspective and comprehending his or her intended meaning.

For example, Jesus recognized that the Samaritan woman's response, "I have no husband" (John 4:17), came from her perspective as a sinful woman and an outcast, and He comprehended the issue behind those words. His understanding lets us recognize her sin and see how He brought her back into relationship with God.

Misunderstanding within congregational life can easily lead to conflicts. This can separate church members and fragment church groups, cause bitterness and stifle growth. Practicing Matthew 18 takes effort, but it is necessary to achieve a healthy community life. A church group that desires to mentor must be willing to adopt a biblical model for addressing conflict with the purpose of gently restoring relationships. This leads to the practice of forgiving one another as we have been forgiven.

Finally, the story of Jesus and His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well provides a framework for how church groups can become intentional and invitational in the ways they pursue the disconnected. First, they will work to bring those individuals into community, and second, they will mentor them as they begin to understand that the living water is for them as well.

Developing a mentoring mindset is a great way to roll out the welcome mat in a congregational group or ministry. This is more than a prepackaged gift for visitors or a passing of the peace that leaves no time for introductions. Instead, a mentoring mindset creates the following opportunities:

- Encouraging one another to keep reaching out to others and to be intentional about following up with those with whom you develop connections.
- Communicating that all are welcome by telling the story of God as He works in the lives of members in the congregation.
- Driving home the message that it is all right to be messy and forgiven

and to begin again. The goal is not to seek to be better or more perfect, because that is impossible, but to pursue Jesus and allow Him to work new life in our hearts and minds.

- Sacrificing our pride and the right to be right by practicing biblical conflict resolution and forgiveness over and over for the purpose of restoring relationships.
- Learning together what it means to follow Jesus in our circumstances, homes, workplaces, and communities as citizens of an ever-evolving culture.
- Sharing our stories and telling His story so new generations can recognize that they are part of a much larger story than just their own.

This is what it means to experience life-enriching Christian mentoring that invites others into God's story of redemption and encourages them to use their God-given gifts to love and serve others. Starting an effective mentoring initiative does not have to rely on reaching a quota or designing a program. It does not need a new discipleship pastor or a designated outreach team. It can begin with one woman who makes herself available to mentor another, a small group that desires deeper connections within their ministry, or a ministry leader looking to train her volunteers and develop events that draw people into opportunities for stronger connectedness.

You will see *mentoring* and *connectedness* used almost interchangeably in this book, because connectedness leads to awareness of those you might mentor or be mentored by. Mentoring in the twenty-first century is organic. It is not necessarily a formal meeting or weekly coffee date—although it can be. Rather, today's approach to mentoring is an understanding that someone you know is available when you need her. Some mentors are skill-specific. If you want to learn how to make a quilt, you spend time with a quilt maker. If you want to learn to manage money better, you visit with someone who may have struggled financially but now is debt free. We can have different mentors for different topics or one mentor who listens as we sort through all we are learning and wish to learn.

As we connect with others in our congregation and community and learn their stories, we see how we can teach and encourage one another more effectively. Connectedness helps us identify mentoring possibilities. It takes courage to take a step forward and find out what might work best in your context and your congregation.

A mentoring effort can start today. With you.

While it is true that small groups, intentional ministries, and specific events can be designed for authentic conversations and deeper connections, a mentoring ministry does not need to involve a change in existing programs. It does, though, require a change in perspective and a willingness to develop a mentoring mindset. Instead of a shift forward, it can mean a shift back to intentional conversation and intergenerational gatherings designed to help others develop a sense of belonging.

A person with a mentoring mindset begins to identify and share his or her own stories of lessons learned, even the ones long hidden, that clearly demonstrate the wonders of a loving, forgiving God. These are the stories that give others permission to be messy and be loved anyway.

This is what the woman at the well experienced from Jesus Himself. He restored her dignity by breaking through cultural barriers and giving her a purpose. He invited her into conversation, offered her living water, and changed her life. Yes, He held her accountable for her actions, but He did not hold them against her. He helped her understand what it meant truly to meet the Lord who was standing before her, ready to be known.

This is a good model for us to follow in Christian mentoring. And this is not the only story. Mordecai encouraged his cousin Esther to step into a critical role at a critical time; Jethro mentored Moses in leadership strategies; Ruth and Naomi encouraged and comforted one another at times of great grief and challenge; Elizabeth and Mary had the shared knowledge and experience of being unexpected mothers in an unexpected way.

Scripture gives us real examples of what it means to connect with someone who is thirsty, to accept her where she is but not allow her to stay there, to offer her living water and watch her leave the pitcher at the well in her rush to tell others to come and see.

Many of us are a part of a group to help foster mentoring on Sunday mornings, but what if mentoring were a real part of the church culture inside and outside those walls? Whether you are a ministry leader or a man or woman looking to mentor others, reflect on these stories and see how they apply to your own group or situation. Share this with your planning team to see where small changes can be made in your event planning. Build time into your personal or group life to listen to another's story and hold one another accountable. Connect on a deeper level and encourage others to do so as well.

Come with me as we look closer at Jesus' example at the well, and see what happens.

MENTORING—WELL WORTH THE JOURNEY

Jesus, wearied as He was from
His journey, was sitting beside the well.

(John 4:6)

So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as He was from His journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (John 4:5–7)

Counting the Cost

Modern-day mentoring is all about meaningful connections. It does not have to be a program, a professional pursuit, or a formalized five-step process. Instead, it can be as simple as investing time for conversation, letting your guard down, and feeling safe enough to be honest with one another. It is not complicated. It's real. That is what we all want, isn't it? Surface-level niceness doesn't cut it. We want to share real life with real people because we need people to walk with us. We need those who can share what they have learned on their journey through the mistakes and moments of success. We're not looking for the perfectly polished polite people we see in social media, but messy everyday people who love Jesus and want to figure out how to follow Him together.

The Bible is a book full of real stories about messy people who found themselves in the middle of a bigger narrative. The stories are about men and women of different ethnicities, cultures, and social classes, who are all a part of something bigger than themselves. We will look at a few of these characters throughout this book, but we start with two in particular: a Samaritan woman and a thirsty Rabbi. It is a familiar story about an unlikely encounter that brought a disconnected woman into community in a surprising way.

This woman seemed to avoid connection. In fact, she intentionally went to the well at midday, a time very few others would be around, so she wouldn't feel awkward around other women. Her lifestyle was not one that others approved of, so she avoided them.

What about you? Is something holding you back from connecting with others? Sometimes mistakes or perceived shortcomings or inadequacies separate us from others. Social media creates a false sense that everyone else has life figured out: we see perfect family photos, exciting vacations, and healthy gourmet dinners. We desire people to believe the best about us, so we post our own perfect pictures. However, such images seldom portray a standard of perfection we can maintain. We are not so perfect most of the time! Some of us may avoid events or even conversations for fear that others will discover how imperfect we really are. "Why would I go to the Bible study, activity, or event? I won't fit in. Better for me to appear busy somewhere else or just stay home." Maybe, like the woman at the well, we have something to hide, or maybe we are afraid that our true self isn't enough.

Or it might be that we are secure in who we are and open to connecting with others, but we fear their reaction. Sometimes it is difficult to offer help without implying that we think the other person is helpless. How can we gauge whether our reaching out will be met with a welcoming reception and not lead to embarrassment or rejection? It seems complicated; for some, it is easier to stay away, appear busy, and avoid the connection.

In John 4, the woman at the well was good at avoidance. Midday was the hottest part of the day, when most people avoided going out to do much hard work. Yet, there she was on her way to draw water from the well. We assume this was a normal routine for her. Instead of joining a group of other women who typically went to the well in the cool of the morning, she went when there would be no whispers, sideways glances, smirks, or put-downs. She risked no awkwardness or rejection, because no one else would be at the well at this time of day. She could draw her water quickly, return home, and shut the door.

Can you imagine her lonely footsteps on the dusty ground? It was quiet except for the sound her steps made. Those footsteps carried with them a deep silence—the kind you can drown in if you’re not careful. Sometimes the disconnected are right among us. Maybe it is the elderly man sitting alone at McDonald’s, or the homebound person sitting in front of the television. It could be the high school student walking to her locker without a word of greeting, or the pastor afraid to share his own heartache because so many have their own. Silence can take many forms, and that is why a story about an unlikely stranger who acknowledges an outcast woman draws us in.

As she neared the well, she saw immediately that this day was different. Next to the well sat a rabbi, a teacher. Samaritans did not associate with Jews, and women did not associate with men. Nevertheless, she determined to draw the water quickly and be on her way.

Then, He asked for a drink of water. He broke the silence and invited her into conversation by expressing His need. He broke the rules, broke with custom. This rabbi was tired and thirsty, as anyone would be after such

Mentoring Challenge:

Who might feel disconnected from your church, community, or church ministry? Take some time to find out why. What could be done to help them get connected?

a journey. But He seemed to know her thirst went deeper. This teacher took the time not only to ask for a drink of water but also to offer living water in return.

You are reading this book because something about mentoring appeals to you. Maybe you already mentor and want more clarity, or maybe you are curious about how best to enter and maintain a mentoring relationship. Having worked in school, church, and university settings for nearly twenty years, I can say this: a major obstacle that prevents women from mentoring is a feeling that they are not the right person for the job. Maybe mentoring is for someone else, some think: someone who has more time to give, is more persistent, or more eloquent. Someone who has it all together.

This book is for those who are on the fence about mentoring: those who wouldn't mind being available for coffee or to give an encouraging word but do not feel they have much wisdom to offer. "Young people are looking for a mentor closer to their age; I'm from a different generation, so how could I relate? Younger women are looking for guidance in their careers; I have never worked outside the home or managed my own financial portfolio; what could I offer?" Don't be quick to disqualify yourself from a job description we can all fit; we all have the ability to care about others in a way that makes them feel wanted.

A welcoming spirit and willingness to listen and encourage are important qualities anyone can practice as they walk with someone. It is amazing how much an invitation to your kitchen table for a cup of coffee can mean to someone who is thirsty.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose." Even if we reach out and our kindness is not returned or our offer is rejected, we have this promise on which to fall back. The Lord of heaven and earth can use even our failed attempts. We never know what word or kindness might matter, even if we never see the direct result. Our sacrifice of time and energy and our emotional investment will not be in vain. Love

Mentoring Challenge:

Start paying attention to who seems disconnected. How could you invite them into the things you are already doing, or take some time to go along with them?

has a way of returning its value, even if it takes a long and indirect path.

Jesus did indeed count the cost of the encounter with the woman. He invested the time and made Himself available for a conversation. Every encounter led Him that much closer to the cross. His steps were intentional and sacrificial. His work here on earth was to do the will of His Father, and it would cost His human life. His beloved heavenly Father would turn His face away as Jesus bore the world's sin on the cross—alone. He knew the cost would be great indeed, but He also knew well the benefit that would come with the payment.

How about you? What if the benefit of mentoring outweighed the cost? What if you knew that your limitations could not prevent the impact God would work through you? Would that make a difference to you?

Mentoring Challenge:

Write your list of excuses and then, with a few friends, search the Scripture for verses that address those excuses. Then take time to pray together for the courage to step out.

On this day, as Jesus was returning with His disciples from a long journey, He had an opportunity to make such an impact. He had journeyed from Judea back to Galilee, approximately seventy miles. They left Judea because the Pharisees were concerned about how many Baptisms Jesus and His followers were performing. In truth, Jesus' disciples were performing all the Baptisms, but that didn't matter. It was too early in His ministry for Jesus to go up against the Sanhedrin; there was still much work to be done. So He was returning closer to home; in fact, His first stop in Galilee would be Cana, the site of His first miracle (turning water into wine, John 2:1–11). But there was an important stop He needed to make first.

The most direct route to Galilee was through Samaria, but most Jews took the long way around to avoid associating with the people of that land. The division between the Jews and Samaritans dated back hundreds of years to the time when Assyria conquered Samaria and took many of the Israelites there captive. Not only did some of the Israelites intermar-

ry with Assyrians, but they also adopted some of their religious practices and abandoned some of the Jewish religious practices. These were egregious acts to the Jews. These Israelites had broken the Mosaic Law and were now unclean and were no longer accepted in the Israelite community. Those that intermarried and adopted other religious practices became known as Samaritans, and they settled down close to but apart from their Jewish brothers and sisters. They were avoided, and Jewish religious laws were adopted to increase the separation. Despite this, Jesus took the direct path through Samaria.

To travel from Judea to Samaria was approximately six hours by foot. Jesus and His disciples would have been ready for a rest. Hungry, and definitely thirsty, it would have been hard to think of anything or anyone else. Jesus chose to sit and rest by the well while the disciples went for food.

Jesus knew the consequences of going against cultural and religious norms. He knew the cost He would have to pay, whether it was pausing by a well in Samaria, healing on the Sabbath, or calling out the Pharisees. I am sure He thought of that cost every time He stepped outside the lines of Jewish religious practice—yet He did it anyway. Why? Because the sinless Son of God obeyed the will of His Father, no matter the cost. As we read later in the Gospel of John:

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life. (John 6:38–40)

Jesus does the will of the Father—even if God’s will causes physical discomfort, even if the price is high, even if it will cost His life, for “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

The meeting at the well was worth the social censure because God said so. Jesus broke the silence and told a spiritually thirsty woman to give Him a drink of water. He brought her into conversation, allowed her to ask tough questions, and challenged her to see her own need. He spoke directly to her brokenness—not to leave her in her sin but to call her into relationship with her heavenly Father and back into community. He wanted her to come home.

Who wouldn't want the Son of God to drop by and extend a personal invitation for a drink? This powerful moment teaches us about how we are loved and how to love one another. Forget the baggage, forget your social media profile, and just come as you are.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. (Isaiah 55:1–2)

The Bible has the answers for this hunger and thirst. Look at the relational language found in the Lord's Prayer.

Relationship with God

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;

God's Provision for Needs

give **us** this day **our** daily bread;

Relationship with God and Others

and forgive **us** our trespasses
as **we** forgive those who trespass against **us**;
and lead **us** not into temptation,
but deliver **us** from evil.

(LSB, p. 162, emphasis added)

In fact, as you consider all of Scripture, this passage expresses what it is all about for us: a broken relationship made new again through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. The Lord's Prayer reminds us of this relationship.

God is our Father, and He is in heaven. His name is great, and we are His children.

We know that His kingdom—that is, Jesus sent to us to deliver us from Satan's power and our own sin—and His will are accomplished regardless. God is God, after all. We ask in this prayer that we would be part of His kingdom, now and forever.

God provides for us. He gives us everything, from our smallest needs (food, clothing, and such) to our greatest (protection against the evil one, the assurance of forgiveness, restoration to God, and eternal life with Him). It takes faith to believe that God Himself will meet our needs; it is a relational trust, much like a child possesses in knowing that her caregivers will provide for her needs. But it is a hard truth, because our sinful nature would rather hold on to control. We would rather provide for our own needs than rely on our heavenly Father's provision.

This truth leads us to the next portion of the Lord's Prayer, as we acknowledge that we are sinful. We doubt God's provision and are tempted by all this world claims to offer. This doubt is what led Adam and Eve to eat the fruit in the garden and break the relationship with God in the first place. We need God's forgiveness; we need to recognize that we must share Christ's forgiveness with others.

We pray for our Lord to lead us away from temptation and deliver us from evil. This He did; when Jesus died on the cross, He defeated evil for good. The cross, a symbol of suffering and punishment in Roman times, now becomes our symbol of victory over the daily attacks of temptation as well as of a relationship restored by Christ's work.

There are other aspects of our worship service—what are called the *Means of Grace*—that signify our restored relationship as well. Living water

was given to us in our Baptism when we were washed clean of our sins through the water and the Word and brought into the family of God. We are invited to God's banquet table: we receive bread and wine at the altar, and with it, Christ's presence and His forgiveness.

The Church has what satisfies.

So why do we still feel so thirsty, so dissatisfied?

I think it is because we do not really want to admit how much we depend on our Savior. We want to think we are fine on our own, staying afloat by our own means (or at least we're not as bad off as that guy over there). We hide in busyness, ignoring the nagging feeling that there is more for us right around the corner, and so we end up feeling empty. The irony of our modern times is that although there is so much exposure, so few secrets, very few others have seen our true self. We hide it because we do not want it to be seen. We cannot clean it up sufficiently to make it presentable, so we keep the not-so-perfect parts hidden in the back of the sock drawer to deal with later.

Vulnerability is the key to being able to connect with others. Knowing that someone accepts us as we are helps us relax around them. We need to connect with others so they know they belong as well. God intends for us to be a body, working together, not just a bunch of solo parts moving in our own directions. Disconnected, broken people need to see Christ's story, a tangible personal story, reflected in others. They need to see examples of how God's Word and Christ's salvation apply to their real life, full of real struggles and questions.

Christ is present in our worship service, the Sacraments, and His Word, but He is also present in you. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." How does Christ show up? He shows up through you. How is He really enough when nothing else seems to work?

This is where intergenerational mentoring can be so powerful. As we learn to be vulnerable with others, we challenge one another to acknowledge and address what we have been hiding, to take a look at what is really in the mirror. The beauty of mentoring is that we receive encouragement and grace enough to see the positives we might otherwise miss, the ways God is using us even in spite of our shortcomings, and the work the Holy Spirit is doing in the midst of our not-so-perfect moments.

To do so, we need to let others see more than just what is on the surface. We need to tell the stories of when God met us in a time of need and how He has what satisfies. In those moments, our story (which was never really about us anyway) makes the Savior the main character.

Excuses, Excuses

We can find biblical examples of those who questioned the tasks God placed before them. For example, Abraham questioned how he could be the father of many nations. Sarah, in her late nineties, laughed when she heard she would have a baby. Gideon wondered how three hundred men could defeat a ten-thousand-strong Philistine army. And Moses, the king of excuses, argued with

a burning bush. A burning bush! God's holy presence in a bush that did not burn up! Did Moses really think he was going to win that argument? Sure, he made a good case for his reluctance to lead—he had a stutter, hated speaking in front of people, and wondered why 600,000 Jewish people would listen to him anyway. How would the Israelites know he really was speaking for God? But when it came down to it, he simply did not want to be chosen and to go back to Egypt. Could God just send someone else? Please?

Mentoring Challenge:

What does it mean to see yourself as a way in which Christ is revealing Himself to His people? Who is it that might need to see Christ in you? How do those verses in the Lord's Prayer about "Thy will be done" and forgiving others help you understand whom God might have placed in your life for just this purpose?

But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since You have spoken to Your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” (Exodus 4:10–13)

Excuse 1: I Am Not Qualified to Be a Mentor

Too often, we put biblical men and women of God on a pedestal, when they were really a lot like us. They had their own plan; they had families and responsibilities, fears and insecurities. Then God interrupted their plan. He sent them in a new direction, but sometimes not without a fight. Some argued strongly about how God should reconsider His choices.

As we know, arguing with God is a waste of time. He sent them anyway. These Bible characters did not play center stage. God shouldered the weight of the task. They were His instruments.

Just this past year, as I was discussing mentoring with two of my colleagues, both respected university educators, I was surprised to hear both admit that they knew very little about mentoring. It caused me to pause. After all, they had a wealth of knowledge to share, were intentional and interested in my life and the lives of many others, and were willing to sit down and work through a problem with someone if asked. I saw them both as mentors. What was different was the way we viewed mentoring. They believed mentoring to be an intentional, step-by-step process that took an individual from one level and helped her reach another, either professional or personally. This is an accurate definition of traditional mentoring, but today’s young adults see mentoring as much more organic and problem specific.

Many of the young adults with whom I work view mentoring as the willingness of an individual to walk with them. They are looking for someone

willing to listen and help them discover the next steps. They do not expect their mentor to have all the answers; in fact, they find it refreshing when they get to contribute some of their own knowledge to the relationship. Young adults are looking for someone who can help them grow, whether personally, professionally, or spiritually; more often, however, they are just looking for someone to listen and help navigate the complexities. Often, they are willing to seek out answers from many different people, not just one.

A mentor could help encourage in an area such as parenting or money management or learning how to roast a twelve-pound turkey so it doesn't turn out undercooked or dry. Or a mentor could just listen and pray with the mentee. It can be someone who reminds her that there is no perfect answer to many of life's questions but encourages trust that God is faithful and just. Mentoring for the Church in the twenty-first century is less about following a specific plan and more about walking with a person and navigating life together as it comes.

So how about you? Do you view yourself as a mentor, or do you shy away from being intentional about connecting with others? If so, what holds you back? You are not alone in your hesitation; I do it too. Often I have the opportunity to walk alongside students who are much more talented in particular areas than I am. Occupational therapy majors have the entire muscular and skeletal systems memorized, and, well, I get biceps and triceps confused. But what I have found is that God is really good at knowing when two people need each other, no matter how different their skill sets might be. Mentoring means that I step out in faith, knowing God is able to use even me. Think about what holds you back from intentionally connecting with others and forming mentoring relationships. Your reasons for not reaching out might be a little different from mine, but you probably have them just the same.

Nevertheless, as members of the Church we are each a part of the Body of Christ. Colossians 3:16 says that we are to “let the word of Christ

dwell in [us] richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God.” In other words, the Word of God dwells in us for a purpose: to teach and correct one another, to praise and worship God, and to be thankful—together.

Mentoring Challenge:

Pray for someone with whom to be in a mentoring relationship, and then pay attention to whom God places in your path. Don't be afraid if the first couple of connections or coffee dates do not work out. We learn from failed attempts as well as successful ones. Just be willing to put yourself out there.

Mentoring includes identifying others and helping them navigate life's challenges along with us. The excuses don't matter, because God gives us spiritual gifts and ways to share His love and the message of Christ's Gospel.

This is important. God does not expect us to have all the answers, but He does ask us to disciple by pointing people to Himself. The Great Commission

passage of Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In the Hebrew, *go* in this verse can be translated, “as you are going” make disciples.

Mentoring Challenge:

Who can help you with altar guild duties? Would some youth in your church join you at home and bake with you for the funeral luncheon or other special event? Whom can you mentor to help manage a budget or to be a future program coordinator?

In other words, as you are going, invite others to learn with you.

And in turn, whom will you let walk with you? Who will walk with you in your weakness, your anger, in a place of deep hurt or grief? As you are going, make disciples. Make students of Jesus as you are also a student of Jesus. Isn't that the beauty of the grace we speak of

every Sunday morning? We do not have to have it all together. In fact, we never will. It is by God's grace that we live and work and have our being. So

let's live in that grace that makes perfect God's work in our weakness, and see what can happen when we let others in to journey with us!

We get intimidated because somehow we have convinced ourselves that we have to have a theology degree to disciple effectively. But discipleship is more than pastors and church workers training up volunteers and lay leaders. It is an intentionality to teach others while we are learning more in our own walk with the Lord, to share the lessons we've learned and help others learn along with us.

This is what makes mentoring a form of discipleship. Christian mentoring includes modeling our faith by our daily lives and teaching others what we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are learning about Jesus. The lessons we are learning from Scripture about faith, trust, confidence, and hope are the same ones someone around us needs to learn. So, as we are going, we can teach others as well. As we are learning about Him, we can share that with others. As we are learning how to serve Him, we can invite others to serve Him with us.

To be sure, our pastors are called by God to shepherd us, administer the Sacraments, preach the Gospel, and ground us in strong teaching, counsel, and care. But pastors do not have the arm to reach where we can, to connect with those in our workplace, grocery store, or family circle who may never walk through the doors of a church. In fact, the only place they may see Jesus is in the way we reflect Him, model His love, and talk about what we are learning about Him.

Now, who has God placed near you that needs to hear it also? Yes, this may mean being a bit vulnerable and stepping outside of your comfort zone. It is easy to listen to advice from someone who has struggled with the same problem or at least has wrestled with their own questions. It's nice to know we are not the only ones trying to figure everything out.

Mentoring Challenge:

So what is God teaching you now? Think about it. What lesson keeps rising to the surface?

Letting our light shine may bring more attention to parts of us we would rather others know nothing about, the mistakes we would rather forget. But mentoring isn't about us anyway. It is about declaring the wonder of Him who brought us out of the darkness and into the light, our Rescuer and Redeemer, and encouraging others to experience that wonder as they learn to walk with Him too. Our own weaknesses do not take center stage, but the grace of God does. "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine."

The apostle John puts it this way:

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 cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Yes, it is hard to step out when all we can see are our own limitations. So what propels us to begin a mentoring effort? Maybe it is a role we have been asked to play. Maybe your pastor asked you to start a mentoring effort at your church. Perhaps that young adult you have greeted a few times walked right up to you and asked if you would mentor him or her.

In any case, someone asked and you said yes. He or she believed you could do it, even when you believed you could not. You trusted that voice, even when you did not trust your own.

Or maybe no one has asked yet, but you desire to try. Maybe your desire to mentor stems from a vocation to which you are called. This world is tricky to navigate, and you want to walk with others as they figure it out. You see, I think Jesus knows what we often forget: us. If the Father says you can, then you can. If you are willing to step out, then believe God will be there to provide.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. (John 15:16)

It is not a stranger who is asking you to step out. It is someone who created you and knows you intimately. Yes, He knows what's in your closet, your secret thoughts and actions. He knows how you really feel about getting up in the morning and how much your mind wanders during the Sunday morning sermon. And guess what: He still chose you.

Moses exhausted his list of excuses about why God should send someone else. God listened and then sent him anyway, not because of his ability but because of His will. The weaknesses of Moses help us see who was really doing the work behind the scenes.

There is always enough ability, time, and wisdom when God is leading, because the call to mentor is not about us; it is about God working through us. When we stop to help, we are blessed as well. We are given a front-row seat to watch God work His wonders in the life of another, and we are richer for the opportunity.

Excuse 2: I Don't Have Time Right Now

The famine hit her family hard. It was just the two of them, for she was a widow. A female sole provider in ancient times did not have it easy. Work for women was sparse, and in times of drought, charity would be also. Their resources had run out. There was enough oil and enough flour for only one more meal with her son. One. She was out now collecting sticks to start the fire that would cook it. And then they would just wait to die and hope the end would come quickly.

Mentoring Challenge:

Think of a time God blessed you through an unexpected conversation or relationship. How might this encourage you to reach out again?

Can you imagine her heartache? I am sure she had fought every day to provide for her little family during a terrible dry period in Zarephath. (For context, read 1 Kings 17:1–16.) This widow had exhausted all ability to earn a little money to buy a little more. She was out of options. There was no hope for anything different. This was the end. Had her cries and prayers

for mercy fallen on deaf ears? Her heart was breaking as she looked at her son, knowing he would not live to see better days. He was already so thin. They had been through so much. I imagine that she wept as she collected the sticks for their last meal. This was it.

But it was there, at what looked like the end, that another tired, thirsty man asked a desperate woman for a drink of water. Funny, isn't it? Another woman, another drink. The man was not just anyone; he was the prophet Elijah.

This was the same prophet who, in weeks to come, would challenge the prophets of Baal to a barbecue standoff. The prophets of Baal and their gods versus Elijah and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Which god would light the fire for their servant's sacrifice? It was no contest. Baal didn't show; he was, shall we say, unavailable. Israel's God didn't just get the fire going; He provided a showstopping, impossible-to-miss event. Fire fell from heaven, and the steaks were well-done. It was enough to send those prophets of Baal running for their very lives.

Prior to that, however, this prophet stood before this woman in the midst of a famine and asked for a drink of water. This woman did not know Elijah or what he was about to accomplish. She certainly wasn't an Israelite, and she probably had very little knowledge of the Israelite God. In fact, Zarephath would have been under the rule of King Eth-Baal of the Zidonians, also known as Queen Jezebel's father. Elijah and Jezebel were not the greatest of friends, and Jezebel certainly did not see any value in worshipping the God of Israel (see 1 Kings 19:1–2).

We have no assurance that this woman of Zarephath knew anything about the Israelite God, although she may have heard of Him. But God knew her heart just the same. She would do it. She would bring the drink, even when she had every right to think of herself and her starving son. We would understand if her thoughts were anything but generous. "Really! Now? I am just a little busy getting ready to let my son die, thank you very much!"

To add insult to injury, Elijah asked her to bake him a little cake of bread as well. She told him of their desperate state and expected that the prophet would empathize. Her excuse could not be ignored, for it was true. She really had nothing left to give. Elijah would have to understand; maybe he would even say a prayer to his God as he continued on his way.

She said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” (1 Kings 17:12)

In return, she received a ray of hope from this foreign prophet:

Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’” (1 Kings 17:13–14)

The woman demonstrated great faith, and the prophet Elijah received respite among a land of foreign gods. It was not hard to see that this woman was at the end of herself, her last bit, when the prophet arrived on her doorstep. But isn’t it curious how that last little bit is exactly where God begins?

God had different plans. The little bit was going to last. In fact, every day there was miraculously a little bit more. A little bit more flour and a little more oil, just enough. We pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” but this prophet, the widow, and her son lived in that reality daily. There was daily bread that lasted through the drought, through their time of desperation. Every day she used ev-

Mentoring Challenge:

Why is it that many mentoring relationships form when we are at the end of ourselves? To what subjects can you relate that might make it easier for someone else to open up to you? Have you battled cancer, grieved the loss of a loved one, struggled to find love, or lost a job? Sharing your own past struggles might help someone else open up about their own.

everything, and there was nothing left. And every morning there was a little bit more.

I love this story, because I can relate. There are times I feel so empty. Every moment is filled; my attention is demanded at every turn. I want to store up reserves, create a little stash of time, energy, even sanity! Then someone knocks on my door asking for my last bit, and it is all I can do to keep from slamming the door and shutting him or her out. But God reminds us to ask Him for daily bread, enough for today.

I want to be like the woman in 1 Kings 17. I want the Lord to increase my faith so much that I use it all up every day—my time, my resources, my last bit, knowing that tomorrow there will be enough. But I can tell you, I never come close. I hoard my minutes rather than spend them. What if I need time later? Is this activity really serving God, or is it me just wanting to please someone else? I need to reserve a little for myself, don't I? I deserve it. I mean, who can keep living life on their last bit? I want savings, insurance, security, and comfort. In fact, one could argue that among the greatest idols of our day in Western culture is the pursuit of comfort by our own creation. If we could only have this or that item, then we would be comfortable. Then we could start to serve others, because we could do so from a place of comfort.

Matthew 6:25, 32–33 says,

Mentoring Challenge:

What little bit could you do that could make a big difference? How could you take a bit of time to connect with someone at your church, in your community, or at work that might lead to something more meaningful over time?

“Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? . . . Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

What if you stepped out in faith, knowing that God will provide what you need? What if your little bit of time made the difference in the life of a young man or woman you met? Not because you knew your time would make a difference, but because you trusted God to use you.

Mentoring can start with just a little bit. Just a little encouragement, a kind word, and a moment to listen. That little bit can go farther than you expect.

Jesus Used His Last Bit

Although He was led to take the straight route through Samaria, Jesus could have just ignored the woman at the well. He was tired and hungry, and His disciples would soon return to give Him food and drink. He could just wait quietly and look away from her.

But Jesus spoke up, and not in a place that we think of as comfortable. He was not having this conversation in His living room or the church sanctuary. He was in foreign territory. If it got out that Jesus was talking with Samaritans, especially those with questionable backgrounds, it could cause ripples that could turn into large waves. She could have certainly ignored Him. There was no way a Samaritan woman would speak first to a man, let alone a Jewish rabbi. The cultural gap was too large. She could have quietly approached, drawn her water, and left without a word or even a glance. But a tired Jesus chose against mere excuses. He chose to ask her for a drink, to break the silence, because there were bigger things at stake.

Drawing water was a necessary and frequent activity, so people (particularly women, servants, and travelers) would naturally gather at wells. The one where Jesus and the Samaritan woman met was not just any well—it was Jacob's same well from centuries ago, when the Jews and Samaritans were still one people. This was more than a random meeting spot; Jesus chose it to make a point about water.

It was at this well that Abraham's servant found his son Isaac a wife and that Abraham's grandson Jacob met his wife Rachel for the first time. Wells

were great places to meet people, and for a particular family, a great place to meet a future wife! It was at a different well that Moses chased away some shepherds that were harassing Zipporah and her sisters, and in so doing he met his future wife and family.

Wells factor into stories about God's people who were central in His plan to fulfill the covenant promise that the Christ would come and wash away all that was broken. First, they were likely meeting spots, and second, they offered what everyone needed to live: water.

Again, Jesus meeting with the woman at the well was not an accident. This meeting was chosen for an important conversation in a significant place. Here was a specific moment to bring a people back to the covenant promise that the Christ was coming to restore the relationship broken by sin. Jesus was not here to meet His future wife as the other men in the covenant promise did; however, He did make the Church His Bride.

Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." He started the conversation, took the time, and made the sacrifice. The harvest was ready, and she was among those who needed to hear that His living water was available to all.

The Good News was for her in particular. In fact, she has become a poster child representing those who need to hear it most. Her life of sin and her repentance show that Jesus comes to all and for all, regardless of their sin. He is a promise keeper and serpent killer.

Her dramatic example is a comfort. After their conversation by the well, she would leave her pitcher behind. Jesus would refuse for a time the food His disciples offered and focus on God's will:

Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."
But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about. . . . My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." (John 4:31–32, 34)

What If Your Little Bit Was Enough?

Let's go back to the example of the starving widow and her last little bit of oil and flour. What if mentoring was like this—a little bit that was always enough to give away? Sharing a little bit to help someone else be a little less hungry would be worth it, wouldn't it?

Mentoring is a ministry of presence; it often begins in the moments of interruption, such as being tapped on the shoulder and asked for a drink. Mentoring can begin when we are called to meet a need for someone else, whether planned or sudden in nature. Be open to the different ways the Lord might be calling you to serve.

Mentoring can be as simple as a moment—a smile and word of encouragement to a mom with unruly toddlers in a grocery store. It can also center on a topic, a need, or a project. It can be implemented a number of different ways and still have an incredible impact. As far as ability required, may we all meditate on 2 Corinthians 12:9:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

The Lord knows our weaknesses, but He uses each of us to make a difference according to His plan.

Let me share an example of someone who was a mentor to me in the simplest of ways. As a middle-school preteen, I was just a bit awkward. (Okay, you got me; I still am.) I had this unruly, frizzy, and relatively thick hair. I had no idea what to do with it. At that time it was popular to get perms to make your hair curly, and my perm did this to an extreme. I looked like orphan Annie with tight brown curls. I was always meddling with it and trying to tame its wildness. Sometimes I would attempt some of these fixes while I was sitting in the pew on Sunday morning. On one particular day, when the sermon got a little lengthy, my hair became extremely twisted in my ponytail holder, and I could not get it out. Pulling at it with my arms in