

# GROWING LEADERS SESSION 1 LEADERSHIP MATTERS

## The Beginning

Once you have had your exploratory meeting and agreed to press on, make sure you set the dates for a meeting between each of the ten sessions. This update gives some ideas on how to approach the first meeting following Session 1: Leadership matters.

## Shape of the Meeting

There are several things it would be good to cover:

- Building relationship.
- Agreeing expectations of the mentoring relationship.
- Reviewing how the first session went.

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIP

Creating a climate of trust is the first priority. This second meeting needs to continue the process of getting to know one another. Begin your time with one or two questions that help you in this process.

Trust and ease are developed over time, and also through discussing the expectations you both bring to it and establishing and agreeing the boundaries and ground-rules within which you will work.

### AGREEING EXPECTATIONS

This is a verbal agreement between you regarding how you will operate. Central to this is the issue of what you expect of one another. Most of the problems that occur in mentoring relationships are fuelled by unmet expectations. And most of these are because they are unspoken, so one person doesn't know the other has those expectations. The solution? Establish clear expectations at the start. You may like to use some or all of the following questions:


- What can I do to help you get the most out of our relationship?
- What characteristics are important for you to observe in me to develop a sense of trust?
- If a situation arose that generated tension or conflict

between us, how do you prefer we resolve this? From your perspective, what do you consider to be the best steps to prevent this occurring?

- How would you prefer our sessions to be structured?

Be sure to clarify the following:

- **Commitment** Agree under what terms one of you can cancel a meeting. We suggest it is vital to have a high priority on these meetings in your diaries.
- **Communication** What communication will be appropriate before and after a meeting, and in between meetings? We suggest an email before the meeting to identify things that the participant would like to talk about, perhaps an email afterwards to summarise the action points from the mentor. Are you expecting to have any contact in between?
- **Time frame** How long will you meet for, and what is the best time to meet?



‘TAKING TIME ASIDE TO  
THINK, REFLECT, ENGAGE,  
PRAY AND DECIDE IS VITAL  
FOR THE ONGOING  
GROWTH OF LEADERS.  
MENTORS PROVIDE A  
STRUCTURE AND CONTEXT  
FOR SUCH CRITICAL WORK.’



IT IS NOT FRIENDSHIP –  
IN THE SENSE THAT IT  
IS NOT A RECIPROCAL  
RELATIONSHIP. IT IS  
'TWO BRAINS  
FOCUSING ON ONE  
PERSON'S ISSUES'.

- How easy/hard do you find it to accept you are a leader? Why?
- What leadership role would you love to take on?
- Identify an occasion when your leadership style worked well. Why was that, and what can you learn from it?
- Identify a time when your leadership style didn't work well. Why was that and what can you learn from it?
- How does your own preferred leadership style relate to the situation you currently lead within?
- What is the main action you are going to take as a result of this session?

### A Reminder

Mentors need to be good at listening and asking questions in order to help participants to gain insight and to apply those insights to their character, behaviour, and life.

Sometimes it will be helpful for you to share your own experience or even to give advice – but do be wary of this, as it is easy to fall into the trap of giving our ideas at the expense of helping our mentees to access their own ideas. Try and get them to do most of the talking. It certainly isn't the place for us to be the focus of attention.

### WHAT IT ISN'T

Sometimes it helps to remind ourselves what mentoring isn't.

It is **not spiritual direction** as such, though there may be elements of this (and of course it depends how you see the role of spiritual direction).

It is **not friendship**, in the sense that it is not a reciprocal relationship. It is 'two brains focusing on one person's issues'. We hope it is friendly, but please don't expect your mentee to be mentoring you as well.

It is **not counselling** or therapy, though you may be using similar skills... but if you find that each session is going over the same personal problems or areas of real distress, then maybe you need to think about enabling your mentee to find a dedicated counsellor to support them with that area.

In all of this do be yourself – half the fun of mentoring is that there is room for us to engage as ourselves. Do ask your mentee what they want. And keep asking how is this going, reviewing your relationship to make sure it's meeting their needs.

- **Confidentiality** Agree how you will handle confidentiality. It is important for the mentee to know they are in a safe place.
- **Challenge and affirmation** Talk about how the mentee receives challenge and affirmation best. Some will want things to be tackled gently and over time, others will see this as 'pussy-footing around', they want to be challenged directly and promptly. Some will receive affirmation best spoken at the time. Others receive it better written in an email afterwards. And talk about how the mentee will indicate whether the challenge and affirmation ratio is about right.
- **Evaluation** How will you evaluate the meeting? Our suggestion is at the end of each session it would be good to ask what worked well and what could be improved.

### SESSION 1

The first session covers three main areas: (1) What is leadership? (2) What is distinctive about Christian leadership? (3) Leadership styles. The session runs over a Friday evening and Saturday, and includes time to get to know one another and an overview of Growing Leaders. The aim is to provide a foundation for the whole course.

Our experience is that often those on Growing Leaders are unsure whether they are a leader or not. This session provides them with some insights into the wide variety of shapes and sizes leaders come in, and also offers them a tool to assess their particular leadership style. It often helps for people to see that there isn't only one way of leading.

On the handouts that are provided there are some questions that they are invited to explore with their mentors. On this session these include:

- What has most encouraged you to grow as a leader?

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