

GROWING LEADERS SESSION 2 ESTABLISHING IDENTITY

Introduction

Session 2: Establishing identity focuses on our relationship with God, and explores how important it is for leaders to be rooted in Christ. Central to a Christian understanding of leadership development is a recognition that a Christian leader first has to be a follower of Christ before they can be a leader of others.

The session explores the cycles of grief and grace (see chapter 3 of the paperback Growing Leaders). This helps them to identify whether they are leading from a place of acceptance or using their leadership role to try and gain God's acceptance. Many people struggle with this, yet without this firm foundation in place, their self-worth, security and significance may be located in the wrong place.

It then goes on to consider spiritual disciplines, what they are and how they can help us remain in God's grace.

Following this session they are asked to complete a spiritual MOT, and to discuss this as part of their mentoring session. It is simply an opportunity for them to take a structured look at their spiritual life, reflect on where they are and where they sense God might be leading them in the future. There are some handouts to help with this exercise, be sure to get them from the course leaders.

The questions they are invited to explore include:

- What would it mean for you to abide in Jesus over the coming months?
- How do you respond to the truth that Jesus has chosen you (John 15:14-17).
- What does the cycle of grief look like in your life?
- Where have you experienced the cycle of grace?
- How can you make sure that God's unconditional acceptance of you is central to your life?
- What spiritual disciplines do you currently exercise?

- Which one may be appropriate to start? What would hinder you in doing that?

Frameworks

The initial session(s) in any mentoring relationship tend to be focused on getting to know each other, checking out expectations and agreeing the 'ground-rules' for working together.

After that, we need a workable framework – not rigid – but one that can be used to provide shape to the ongoing sessions. In some senses this is just a matter of logic and common sense, but we have found it helps to describe it. People usually think of it in these terms.

- Informal chit-chat to break the ice – recognising that no matter how deep and significant the previous mentoring session was, we always begin a new session more superficially and need a little time to 'get into it' together.
- Linking back to the previous session – how has the mentee progressed with issues that were discussed last time, and any goals that were set? What needs to be reframed as a further goal for the future?
- Agenda building – what's around that we may want to look at today, both things from the participant and things raised by the session.
- Working through the agenda – which may consist of just one key issue or a series of things, usually raised by the mentee but not excluding things the mentor wishes to raise.
- Enabling the mentee to set one or two key goals to work on before the next session.
- Review of session – how was it for you, prayer, checking date and time of next session.

....all this interspersed with appropriate feedback, affirmation, encouragement, and challenge.

This is really common sense. It's in no way meant to be

prescriptive, as each combination of mentor and mentee is unique, but keeping an eye on the way we're doing things can help the sessions to be more effective.

Diamonds

However, as we develop as mentors we may well see our mentoring sessions in terms of having a clear shape, rather than a fixed framework... and that's where diamonds come in. Imagine a diamond shape...

We begin a mentoring session at one apex of the diamond – from the point of meeting together again. The initial phase of the session will be an 'opening out' phase – exploring what's there, hearing what the mentee wants to focus on, helping them to share what's on their mind, getting them to expand a topic.

In this 'opening out' phase, the skills the mentor uses are: listening, questioning, reflecting back, paraphrasing, summarising, encouraging, showing empathy – all aimed at enabling mentees to hear themselves think and to gain insight into their situation.

Questions and phrases to use at this stage include: 'What are you working on?'; 'Tell me more about...'; 'Explain that to me in another way...'; 'What insights have you had since we last met on this?'; 'What would make today's session successful for you?'

And so we move towards the widest part of the diamond shape. Then at some point we change tack. We can't say exactly when this will be... it may be half way through the session, it may be towards the end (our diamond doesn't need to be a symmetrical one!)... but we have to change tack, because we don't want our mentees going away all 'opened up' and unresolved. So we have to work on helping them to 'focus in' and enable closure.

The skills the mentor uses in this second phase are rather different: we may have to do more challenging, give

feedback, summarise, play our hunches, ask questions aimed at helping the mentee to find possible solutions or ways forward, encourage them to set themselves one or two specific goals or action steps to work on.

Our aim is to close the diamond by the end of the session, to finish things off – if not neatly then at least comfortably – so that the mentee can go out from the session with insight, clearer, encouraged, resolved to take some key steps towards their goals.

To some extent this is a natural process, but it is the mentor's responsibility to manage it effectively.

What we notice is that some of us tend to be better at the 'opening out' skills and may duck the specifics, not doing the focusing and 'enabling goal setting' phase very well; whereas others of us hurry to solutions and miss out on the genuine exploration of what's really going on that is necessary if we are to help the mentee to find ways forward, solutions or resolutions that are truly appropriate for them.

Shaping the session

So working at developing a good diamond shape to each session seems important.

Sometimes there's just one diamond. At other times we may actually move in and out of several smaller diamonds within one session, as a topic opens up and is resolved, and we move on to another topic. And the whole of our relationship with the mentee can be seen as one huge diamond too, as we develop and open up the relationship from small beginnings and aim to 'exit' leaving the mentee in a good place to progress without our ongoing support.

Enjoy creating some diamonds.



'Mentoring is much more expansive than simply teaching or training. It is investing time and prayer. It is building relationships and investing emotionally in transfer of values, and skills and attitudes.'

TED ENGSTROM

Growing Leaders
www.cpas.org.uk
admin@cpas.org.uk
0300 123 0780