

April 28, 2011

To: "Steve Poenitz" [stevenpoenitz@yahoo.com](mailto:stevenpoenitz@yahoo.com)

Subject: Your Doctoral Project

Greetings Again Steven:

I send the following ideas not just to try to help you with your academic project but also to register our stance on four terms that beg discussion regarding possible distinctions.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email and share any reactions/recommendations that enlighten both of us. Our definitions of the first two concepts are drawn from pages 3-5 of this 2010 booklet authored by me, Sharon Heron, and Don Payne – **What the Bible Teaches About Mentoring: A Case for Discipling with a Capital D.**

### 1. Discipling

Jesus referred to His followers as His disciples. He mandated that a fundamental commitment of His disciples was and still is to make other people His disciples (Matthew 28: 18-20). He does not say we are to make disciples of our own. In other words, the true discipling relationship Jesus talked about is between people and Jesus, not between two or more people. The New Testament does refer to disciples of men (e.g., of John the Baptist), but these relationships are merely referenced, not used as encouragement for all people to duplicate. Discipleship is only advocated in relationship to Christ.

Interestingly, the words related to discipleship only tell us that we are to make disciples (this is the command in the "Great Commission" ), of whom to make disciples (all nations), toward whom we are to disciple people (Jesus), and the outcome of being a disciple (learning from Jesus and becoming like Him). However, **there is no word that tells us everything we need to know about the process of making disciples!** The contemporary English word "discipleship" was developed to refer to particular processes or phases of spiritual development. Yet, in its common usage, it is not actually a biblical word!

### 2. Mentoring, especially Christ-centered mentoring

We propose to use the word *mentoring* for the **process** of people developing other people and, in Christ-centered mentoring, helping them grow as disciples of Christ. In that sense, the term *mentoring* encompasses multiple types of influence toward the goal of discipleship. Even though the term *mentee* does not appear in the Bible, we equate it to the use of disciple in both the Old and New Testaments. We consider a "Christ-centered mentee or protégé" to be a "New Testament **D**isciple" (with a capital **D**), a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

Narrowly-focused relationships had value in biblical times and still do today. However, Christ's "Commission" (the marching orders He gave His disciples after He was resurrected) invited a *much more comprehensive discipling commitment* in order to win people over to the Kingdom of God and to encourage them to maintain their responsibilities. Jesus offers us this mentoring approach.

We can never match the nature of the relationship between Christ and His disciples. However, we can thrive because He was and is our Lord, Creator, eternal Savior, Judge, and more. Following Him and His

teachings was (and is) very much different from following a man or woman without the authority of God. Jesus was and is the ultimate Mentor. Choosing to be His disciple was (and still is) a life-changing course.

The broader view of **Discipling** (we added the capital **D**) involved growth in *all aspects of day-to-day life* of the early followers of Christ as they struggled to understand His teachings, tell the world about Him and the Kingdom, and become more Christ-like themselves. Christ labored to help His disciples grow so that they could face every situation and challenge ahead of them. When He left them, He sent the Holy Spirit to continue this assistance role. Although we can never duplicate the depth of Jesus' relationships with His followers, we can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, emulate parts of those connections.

We use the term **Christ-centered mentoring** as synonymous with this expanded view of **Discipling**. It is a process that can enable all of us to develop as robust disciples of Christ and help us become everything that He desires for His followers. At its best such mentoring emphasizes mentor-mentee partnerships as broad, mutually beneficial, dynamic relationships in which partners play significant roles – roles that may shift from time to time but that always focus on the goal of honoring God's Word and becoming more like Christ in every area of life. Christ-centered mentors and mentees, with guidance and power from the Holy Spirit, take on life's issues, challenges, and possible goals with knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm. It is a triadic relationship with the Holy Spirit as the initiator, sustainer, revealer, and empowerer. Instead of completing a one-time experience, the partnerships adopt mentoring as a way of life beneficial to accomplishing God's will in the lives of others.

Over the ages, Christ's version of **Discipling** has often been reduced to "small-d discipling." Believers' attention has wandered, and discipling has often been watered down to reluctant pairs or small groups tentatively plodding through workbooks and lessons while avoiding many of the issues, pains, and passions of each other's lives. By adopting the term "**Christ-centered mentoring**," we want to reestablish the importance of Christ's original intention and vision to transform His followers' lives in every sphere of life. We hope to accentuate elements of Christ's **Discipling** too long ignored or, at best, minimized in everyday practice. Christ's command to His disciples in Matthew 28:20 was to teach new disciples "**everything** I have commanded you." Each new follower of Jesus begins a journey of lifelong holistic learning and teaching.

Can mentoring and discipling be equated? With our expanded version, we believe so. Christ-centered mentoring adequately describes the discipling relationship we have discussed. However, men and women can be trained as followers of Jesus by means other than the one-to-one or one (or two)-to-small group partnerships. A follower also is trained and taught by maintaining personal spiritual disciplines, attending corporate worship, listening to preaching, participating in the sacraments, and serving others. These elements of the development of the disciple may not obviously be termed Christ-centered mentoring. However, when mentors instruct mentees or protégés in the use of spiritual disciplines, describe how to use gifts in corporate worship, or act as a sponsor at someone's baptism, we acknowledge such assistance as mentoring that has a significant part in the disciple's growth.

### 3. Coaching

Our perspectives on **coaching** are similar to the distinction we make between discipling and **Discipling**! In narrowly-focused coaching a coach closely observes another person's behaviors, breaks down those overt actions into specific steps, and provides suggestions for performance improvement. The coach

focuses on the performer’s development in a current or planned role, job, or position. The coach seeks financial payment for her/his services.

A mentor can coach one or more mentees/protégés when s/he has expertise (“skill sets”) in a measurable competency area. A coach is not a mentor. A mentor seldom receives financial payment for providing mentoring assistance.

Mentoring and coaching can be contrasted in ways such as the following:

<b>Mentoring</b>	<b>Coaching</b>
Usually personal and/or professional development/peak performance focused	Often corrective: can be development/peak performance focused
Usually work on broad career-life areas + competencies	Usually work on very specific performance skills
Mentors usually volunteer or serve as part of their paid job	Coaches are paid by client or organization for which client works
Mentors receive limited training for role	Coaches usually trained/credentialed for role they perform
Generally 6- to 18- month mentoring partnerships	Generally short- term contracts (weeks)
Oral or written agreements	Written agreements/contracts
Mentees preferably are trained for role	Clients not formally trained to receive coaching
Mentees or mentors can facilitate their relationships pursued.	Coaches facilitate their relationships unless coaching is pursued.
Typically includes coaching.	

**Coaching** (our **capital C**) has become prevalent recently. The primary examples are Life Coaching and “Core Coaching Skills Workshops”. The only difference between this expanded focus and that of higher-level mentoring is that Life Coaches charge for their services, neither role can be billed to health insurance companies or qualify for professional liability coverage, and coaches use that title rather than calling themselves “mentors” (probably because they have not received mentoring training and insist on receiving payment for their services).

#### **4. Counseling and Psychotherapy**

Generally professionals functioning in these areas use prescheduled, time-limited encounters with clients (individuals, couples, families, and groups) to whom they attempt to provide help. Most caregivers in these areas have training at least at the Masters degree level, are state/province-licensed, must possess professional liability insurance, and frequently receive payment from one or more health insurance companies for which they are listed on provider panels.

For people seeking to provide services in these areas, there are ways to avoid the criteria of: advance training at accredited colleges and universities, licensure through state-government agencies, malpractice insurance, and eligibility for receiving payment from clients' health insurance coverage. Labeling oneself as a Personal Counselor, Biblical Counselor, Spiritual Director, or Life Coach avoids these screens.