

CHMN760 Advanced Leadership  
Book Reflection by Steven Poenitz  
*Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*  
Authors: Paul D. Stanley and J. Robert Clinton

I have read this insightful book on the various issues of mentoring. Arguably, this is one of the most comprehensive books I've read on the dynamics of mentoring that includes upward, downward, and horizontal (peer) mentoring. It has been especially helpful in offering the bigger picture of mentoring from the continuum of three types of mentoring: intensive, occasional, and passive mentoring. The authors also present constellation mentoring and peer-to-peer or co-mentoring. I shall find this book to be a trusty reference in the future on the subject of mentoring.

**My Experiences while Being Mentored**

Intensive Mentoring—Coaching

In reflection I've experienced several aspects of mentoring from the definitions offered by Stanley and Clinton. The closest I've ever come to intensive mentoring occurred at the official beginning of my ministry in 1974 while interning in New Jersey. There I had the privilege of working under local pastor supervisors in two separate regions of the conference. Christof Kober oversaw my ministry assignment in the Paterson-Newark-Elizabeth district. His supervision included no formal checklist of items to model or demonstrate in ministry, but his giftedness in ministry introduced me to the structure and operation of the Seventh-day Adventist church pastorate. I had the privilege of doing visitation, funerals, communion, preaching, and most expected functions of a pastor together with Pastor Kober. This administrative introduction to the ministry included engagement and exposure to the nominating committee. It was an assignment that ended too quickly; because, following my work in North Jersey for six months, I then continued

internship under Glen Fillman as my supervisor in South Jersey—the Woodbury-Laurel Springs-Swedesboro district. Pastor Glen’s strengths in Bible study instruction definitely added to my portfolio of ministry possibilities. It seems to me that both of these very capable and gifted pastors offered me a legacy of mentoring that could be classified as intensive coaching as well as the model-mentor type. We did our ministry together, but I depended upon the demonstration of their model ministry as they coached me.

#### Occasional Mentoring--Counseling

Later, in my ministry following seminary, I was privileged to work with several evangelists as a young minister in my own district. The model presented to me by these evangelist-mentors varied, but basically brought solid models of lives lived in close relationship with God. Some of these occasional mentors acted as teachers and counselors in developing my database of ministry experience. I remember Lynn Martel, Ron Halvorsen, Robert Boggess, and Burton Maxwell as mentor-teachers and mentor-counselors for my ministry education. Some exemplified a deep devotional life. Some portrayed a passion to lead individuals to Christ. Others actually directed me to resources to advance my ministerial education. I will always remember their contributions as meaningful and rewarding. The relationships developed were especially helpful in securing my relationship with God while still being a single pastor needing team ministry.

#### Intensive Mentoring—Contemporary Model

I would single out Burton Maxwell as one who best mentored me in a pastor-evangelistic setting for several months in Kansas City. The reason being is that beyond the public meetings and evangelism training, he personally took an interest in training me and

modeling for me the life of a balanced pastor. He actually took me to Christian bookstores in Kansas City, MO, and bought Christian ministry books as resources that would help the development of my pastoral ministry. Out of his background of both pastoring successes and failures, Burton was vulnerable enough to allow me to learn from him what might be valuable and not so fruitful in the full continuum of pastoral ministry. I'll never forget the good times spent later at his home in Lincoln, NE, and the insights observed while staying with him and his wife. His sharing about the difficult times in his pastoral ministry meant so much to me. The modeling of this couple's love for the Lord, vulnerability and openness concerning their children, and personal Bible reading, etc. demonstrated to me what real pastoral Christian couples should model in the ministry.

#### Passive Mentor--Discipler

This particular division is not listed in the book, but the mentors below did not have a formal relationship with me. However, their actions definitely disciplined me to find a relationship with Jesus Christ. Along with my high school and college roommate (who incidentally modeled a consistent devotional relationship with Christ), Morris Venden brought me the most helpful passive mentorship from a discipling standpoint. Even though we rarely met together in a one-on-one setting (there were some contact points when he spoke in our Kansas City Church or left his car at my place for a plane trip and speaking appointment), his books and tapes disciplined me to better understand the gift of grace and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### Occasional Mentor—Sponsor

One church leader (my pastor as a young person and later a conference president and union president) has acted in the position of a sponsor for most of my life—introducing

me to opportunities in pastoring churches and specific assignments in ministry. In fact, my present assignment of pastoring in the Greeneville Seventh-day Adventist Church can be providentially credited to the Lord and this well-known church leader. When my ministry faced some crises and discouragement in a previous church setting, my wife and I felt comfortable enough to spend time with this church leader and his wife on a Christmas vacation and share our frustrations together. Out of this experience we were encouraged and are certain that God opened the opportunity in Greeneville for ministry. He not only placed me originally in ministry, but he helped me along the way and continued to befriend us.

#### Intensive Mentoring—Spiritual Guide

When facing some particular pressures on the West coast, I felt especially blessed to have Roger Wilcox spiritually guide me through those tumultuous times. He would come to the district where I was pastoring and spend a day or two with me visiting potential Christian education students among members and friends. Roger had a wealth of experience from his leadership in the South American Division of Seventh-day Adventists as the president. The special one-liners he shared with me will always remain in my soul. I felt a special kinship with this senior church leader. He would say, “Steve, let’s get together and share tribal waters.” His knack for caring, sharing, visiting in the home, and a genteel spirit nurtured my heart. Even when visiting in the Portland, Oregon, area, he and his wife would invite my wife and me over to their home for a meal. A rich physical, social, and spiritual feast emulated from fellowship with these dedicated folks.

## **My Mentoring Experiences Affecting Others**

### History of My Mentoring Other Pastors

For the past twenty years I've had the pleasure of sharing ministry with a staff from one to five other pastors at a time. Some have been open to connecting with my experience. Others have not connected or received benefit from my mentoring. For the past ten years I've had the joy of sharing ministry with an assistant/youth pastor in the Greeneville Seventh-day Adventist Church. These three pastoral interns have taught me numerous lessons and helped me to understand the value of learning in mid-life. I've been able to intentionally mentor them for a few years in each case.

The greatest joy of my role has been to hear back from these pastors now on their own in the field of ministry and find them affirming some of the things we did together as well as the team ministry relationships and spirit we shared. One pastor who has been to the seminary and now pursues a pastorate on his own presented me with the privilege of preaching his ordination sermon.

I've seen times when I should have been more intentional with these mentorees as young pastors. I realize that I should be willing to challenge them more with situations and hold them more accountable. I must attest that it seems easier to let things ride rather than call them to accountability. However, learning and growth opportunities are missed. I believe that I am facing a personal growth challenge in the next intern coming my way. I pray for wisdom to call him to accountability and challenge him with intentionality in the assistant/youth pastor's position. It seems profitable if I might share with him some of these books to read, such as this one on connecting and mentoring.

### Peer-to-Peer Mentoring or Co-Mentoring

One of the lifting aspects of my ministry in the past five years has been the peer-to-peer fellowship enjoyed with the hospital chaplain and assistant/youth pastor in our district. On Mondays the chaplain and I have met together for lunch to discuss issues in ministry that challenge us. On Wednesdays all three of us have met together to discuss issues facing us. I believe it has given the assistant/youth pastor another perspective also. He not only can relate to my personality and gifts, but also to the chaplain and his gifts of ministry.

We need to step up our accountability levels. That's the area of improvement that I'm aware can help us grow more. There needs to be some intentionality in our accountability with each other. I believe that the Men's Ministry program for the church that we're envisioning can motivate us to be more exemplary in our accountability to each other.

I'm finding that this developing fellowship on Mondays and Wednesdays over lunch has expanded opportunities for co-mentoring with other church members. One gentleman who experienced divorce has been meeting with me on a monthly basis. By his own admission this has kept his life improved and lifted his encouragement level. This area of accountability among men seems to be an area of challenge that is falling more into my lap of responsibility which the Lord wants me to pursue.

Another pastor friend that has moved into the community has accepted responsibility for conducting a spiritual gifts seminar in our church. I'm looking forward to working closer with him also in Men's Ministry.

### Historical Mentors

The biographies of several Christian leaders have been an inspiration to me.