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What We Offer

Why Choose Us?

FAQs

► Archive

Order

Customers

Mailing List

[return to index](#)

Mentoring Examples in the Bible (Part 1)

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Does the Bible support the concept of mentoring? What references to mentors and mentees can we find in scripture? What principles, if any, can we learn from these references?

Although the Bible doesn't use the words mentor, mentee, or mentoring, it frequently refers to what we believe are successful mentoring relationships: Jesus and His disciples, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Timothy, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah and Elisha, Moses and Joshua, Deborah and Barak, Elizabeth and Mary (the mother of Jesus), and many others. All are powerful examples of pairs and the *God-inspired actions* they took to help each other develop.

Moses and Joshua (Mentor and Mentee) aptly illustrate a successful mentoring partnership. Moses demonstrated the wisdom of a mentor by deciding to delegate an important task (Exodus 17:9). He placed one of his soldiers, Joshua, in command of a battle with the Amalekites over a water dispute. In making this decision, Moses demonstrated trust in Joshua's gifts and leadership potential. He opened the way for their ongoing teamwork. This is the first time this "mentor" asked someone else to lead an attack, one of many that his "mentee" Joshua would command.

Did they sit down and negotiate this developmental relationship, calling each other mentor and mentee? Probably not. It's more likely that Moses wasn't cognizant of applying mentoring principles and didn't necessarily

regard Joshua as his mentee. Yet the ingredients of mentoring were there, and Joshua entered a relationship with a respected man that changed Joshua's life forever.

Following this successful assignment, Joshua became a frequent companion of Moses. Even though he was called a servant (e.g., Exodus 24:13, 33:11), he was actually more of a colleague. (*Notice Exodus 3:11. Joshua refused to leave with Moses, something that would not have been permitted of a servant.*) Their mentoring relationship deepened, and Joshua gained valuable knowledge, skills, and confidence.

We find evidence that their mutual trust increased when Moses allowed his mentee to accompany him to an important meeting . . . with none other than God! (Exodus 24:13-14) We're not sure that Joshua was actually with Moses in the presence of the Lord, but we know for certain that he was on the mountain (Exodus 32:17) and talked with Moses on their return to the camp. Imagine the incredible lessons Joshua received that day!

Moses took Joshua to another meeting in a special tent where Moses spoke with God again. Joshua chose to stay at the tent after Moses left to return to camp (Exodus 33:11). Joshua remained on his own in the presence of God. Moses demonstrated significant trust by not interfering in this major opportunity for Joshua.

Moses continued to offer Joshua opportunities to develop. He assigned him (along with 11 other men) to spy out the Promised Land. The mentor gave him a job that required a plan, teamwork, and a report (Numbers 13:16). Moses probably also provided some suggestions for how to carry out this plan.

Finally, Moses affirmed his mentee by commissioning Joshua in the presence of the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 31:7-8). He gave Joshua public recognition for the lessons he learned. What's more, Moses conferred power on his mentee, and vacated his position to him. Their formal mentoring relationship ended. When Moses died, Joshua was appointed as the new leader of Israel and later took his people into the Promised Land (Numbers 27:15-23).

Moses provided a great lesson in how to transfer leadership. A time comes to either step aside to allow our successors to lead in our place or allow them to move on to a place of leadership elsewhere. Moses gave the proper direction, teaching, and recognition to prepare Joshua to fulfill his role in life.

The mentoring relationship of Moses and Joshua was very task-and-performance oriented. They provide clear-cut illustrations of several excellent mentor activities:

- *assigning* the mentee preliminary stretch tasks;
- depending on the mentee's initial performance, making *additional assignments* requiring more skills and responsibilities;
- inviting him (or her) to *key events*;
- allowing the mentee to *observe the mentor* in action;
- *affirming* the mentee for achievements; and

- *stepping aside* to let the mentee succeed.

For more information on Biblical examples of mentoring, see [What the Bible Teaches about Mentoring: A Case for Discipling with a Capital D.](#)



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