
Early Stage Church Planter Mentor Selection Guide

***A How To Guide that will help an Early Stage Church Planter
Connect and Covenant with a Mentor***

**Church Planting Group
North American Mission Board, SBC**

Acknowledgments

This component of eEquip is dedicated to all church planters and their spouses and team members for their commitment to God, for their desire to seeing people won to Jesus Christ, and for growing the kingdom by the multiplying of New Testament churches.

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Part 1—Introduction

The purpose of the guide

The guide will aid an early stage church planter through the process of selecting a mentor who will then walk with the planter through all or a portion of the eEquip process.

The early stage church planter should engage eEquip and this guide after the completion of an informal or formal assessment, such as *Discovery Tools*. The guide will also benefit those early stage church planters who may already have a mentor; if this is the case, then both the early stage church planter and the mentor should read the guide. The early stage church planter should refer back to this guide in the event that it becomes necessary to enlist a different mentor while still engaged in the eEquip process.

While the guide supports the intent of eEquip that every early stage church planter engages in an intentional and covenanted mentoring relationship, we understand that this may not always be the case. Some early stage church planters may choose not to engage in a formal covenant, which could be in written or non-written form. For those who do choose to engage in a formal written covenant with a mentor, a covenant template is provided in Part 3 of the guide. An early stage church planter and mentor can add to or delete from the template as desired.

The guide was designed to give an early stage church planter certain handles to use in selecting a mentor. The guide contains five parts. Part 1 is an introduction that will help the early stage church planter gain an understanding that mentoring is biblical and that all early stage church planters will benefit from having a mentor. Part 2 and 3 deal with the “*How To’s*” of connecting and covenanting with a mentor. Part 4 contains a checklist that an early stage church planter can use to ensure their readiness for selecting a mentor. Part 5 is a bibliography of resources that will be of benefit to both the early stage church planter and mentor.

The desired outcome is for every early stage church planter to be engaged in an intentional and covenanted relationship with a mentor, either formal or informal, that will lead to the early stage church planter achieving his God-given potential.

Mentoring is biblical—examples of mentoring relationships

“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you” (Philippians 3:17, NIV).

“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9, NIV).

While we acknowledge the term “mentor” does not appear anywhere in the Bible, it does not mean that mentoring did not take place. In fact, mentoring was the primary means of instruction in Bible times. As a result, most people followed in their parents’ footsteps. Sons inherited the occupations of their fathers, and daughters took on the responsibilities of their mothers (*As Iron Sharpens Iron*, page 179).

Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God* and former special assistant to the President, prayer and spiritual awakening associate at the North American Mission Board, often says, “The Bible is ultimately a book about **relationships**.” The Word of God suggests that our nature as relational people is ultimately an expression of God’s own nature. Consider the relational nature of God as it is expressed in the three persons of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Reflect upon the following Scriptures, which give examples of mentoring relationships (*As Iron Sharpens Iron*, pages 180-181):

Jethro and Moses (Exodus 18)—Jethro taught his son-in-law the invaluable lesson of delegation.

Moses and Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 34:9)—Moses prepared Joshua to lead Israel into Canaan.

Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42)—Jonathan and David remained loyal to each other during the troubled days of Saul’s declining reign.

Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2:1-16; 3:11)—The prophet Elijah recruited his successor Elisha and apparently tutored him the ways of the Lord while Elisha ministered to Elijah’s needs.

Barnabas and Saul/Paul (Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-30; 11:22-30)—Barnabas opened the way for Saul to associate with the church after his dramatic Damascus Road conversion.

Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 2:19-23; 1 and 2 Timothy)—Paul invited Timothy to join him during one of Paul’s missionary journeys. Timothy eventually became pastor of the dynamic church at Ephesus.

Paul and Titus (2 Corinthians 7:6, 13-15; 8:17; Titus)—Paul and Barnabas won Titus to Christ and recruited him as a traveling companion. Titus became a pastor.

Why an early stage church planter should consider a mentor

The following is taken from unit two *Why Mentor?* of the Mentor Training Presenter’s Guide, North American Mission Board, SBC

Because ...

- Our environment today causes widespread feelings of rootless and disconnected relationships.
- There is a lack of healthy leadership models for church planters to emulate.
- Many church planters find themselves isolated and lonely.
- The problems church planters are facing cause high levels of frustration and burnout.
- Intentional, intensive relationships produce positive impact in a person's life and ministry.
- It provides accountability.
- It promotes and encourages success.
- We are involved in spiritual warfare.

"A church planter longs for someone who understands, knows your pain, and shares your joys....I think the mentoring relationship is wonderfully valuable... many people fail because nobody takes a little bit of time to invest and care about them..."

John Fredricks, a church planter in Tacoma Washington.

"I initially thought, to be honest with you, that the mentoring relationship was more of a matter of formality...I felt like I had it all down when I came up here...there have been some situations and instances where I have found it helpful to go to my mentor and flesh some things out and bounce some things off of him..."

I've been blessed by my mentor..." Kevin Sullivan, a church planter in Northwest U.S.

Part 2—How an Early Stage Church Planter Connects with a Mentor

What to look for in a mentor

As God continues to prepare you for church planting, He will place people in your life that will help you become the person God wants you to be. One such person will be your mentor. The following list of reflective questions is designed to help you consider characteristics that your mentor should have.

Questions you need to ask yourself when connecting with a potential mentor include:

Does this person inspire you?

We all know individuals who have inspired us one way or another. You may have a friend that is intelligent and seems to have an ability to learn things quickly. You may have a friend that has influenced and impacted your life in a great way. You may have a friend who has accomplished great things. However, when it comes to selecting a mentor, remember that not every friend will make a good mentor.

Often in the area of spiritual development and church planting, it is the person of faith who inspires others the most. In Philippians 4:9, the apostle Paul writes, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put into practice.” Paul had a faith that inspired, it was a faith to be desired and emulated. Your mentor needs to be a person of faith. Faith in God, faith in you, and faith in what God is doing through you.

Who do you know that has the kind of relationship with God that inspires you to do the same?

List three people whom you know that inspire you:

Will this person be honest with you?

Honesty is a must. You must be honest with God and you need a mentor in your life that will be honest with you. Even if that honesty means hearing constructive criticism about yourself that may be hard to take at times.

List three people whom you know who demonstrated honesty.

Is this person open and transparent?

Here is where you need to remember that this person you are considering for your mentor, this wonderfully inspiring person who you look up to for guidance, this seemingly tireless saint for God, is still just a person. A person who has struggles and faults that are common to all people. The type of person you need as a mentor, and the type of mentor you need to be someday, is a person who can share the failures alongside the successes. Sometimes we learn more from our mistakes than from the things we do right. Your mentor needs to be a person that is not afraid of being human.

List three people whom you know that demonstrate openness and transparency:

Can this person guide you?

Just because a person does something well does not mean that they will know how to guide others in doing the same. A mentor brings a life of experience and in some cases an understanding of the church-planting situation. Mentoring is essentially a relational activity, which relies heavily on modeling.

When looking for a mentor, you should try and find that person who can tell you how and why he did or did not do something. One model of mentoring and multiplication suggests, "I do, you watch; you do and I watch; you do and someone else watches."

List three people whom you know that you have learned from:

Does this person believe in you?

You know God believes in you or He would not have invited you to be involved in church planting. He would not have given His only Son for you; He would not have preserved His word for you; He would not have inhabited you with His Holy Spirit; and He would not have put people in your life to encourage you. But He did! The person you choose for your mentor needs to see your potential in Christ. He needs to be a cheerleader on the sidelines when things are going right for you. In addition, he needs to be that battlefield medic that picks you up when you are wounded.

List three people whom you know that have encouraged you:

What other characteristics does this person need to possess and why?

Now that you have considered which characteristics that your potential mentor should have, let's consider where you could find such a person.

Where to look for a mentor

The early stage church planter should look to someone who can understand his uniqueness and what it is that God is calling him to be. Most people will look for a mentor amongst those who are already close to them.

As you reflect back you will note that God has already given you mentors at various times in your life. In 1 Corinthians 3:5-6, Paul states, "What, after all, is Apollos, and what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." Perhaps someone once invited you to church, Bible study, or shared the gospel with you, and as result, you were saved. Then, perhaps another person helped you to learn how to study God's Word and as a result, you began to grow as a believer.

Because you have said yes to God's invitation to be involved in church planting and completed either an informal or formal assessment, you now need a mentor who will walk with you through the eEquip process.

The following list is provided to help you, in a brainstorming fashion, to consider where your mentor will come from.

Pastor

Church staff member

Bible study leader

Deacon

Fellow church member

Minister of Missions

Director of Mission/Associational staff

Someone from within the Association

Church Planting Missionaries

NAMB's church planting Web site—www.churchplantingvillage.net

You now know what characteristics you are looking for in a potential mentor and where to find one. Now it is time to approach your potential mentor with the idea of engaging in an intentional and covenanted mentoring relationship.

How to approach a potential mentor

The process of approaching a mentor may seem easy but it can be complicated. Most people don't see themselves as a mentor. They feel inadequate to mentor. Some of these problems are symptoms of society. People don't feel that they are smart enough, worthy, or make enough money or in the area of church work, they don't feel spiritual enough. For that reason, avoid using the terms "mentor" or "mentoring." That term might scare off the person of choice and deter the process before it ever gets started. Of course, that humble attitude is also just what you are looking for. You really do not need a mentor who thinks "I have arrived."

The best way to approach your potential mentor is prayerfully. You only want God's choice for your life and the only way to have peace in any decision is through prayer. Someone once said, "Because our battle is not against flesh and blood we need to remember that prayer is not merely preparation for the battle...it is the battle." Also, don't forget the advice mentioned in Psalms 1:1, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked..." Make sure you have God's choice before you approach a potential mentor!

You must also be patient with the process itself in selecting a potential mentor. Someone once said, "Timing is everything." After asking God to make His will clear, make sure you time your appointment with your prospective mentor around his schedule. Then, you must also be patient in waiting for an answer. God needs to make His will clear for your mentor also.

Howard and William Hendricks, in their book, *As Iron Sharpens Iron*, make the point that your approach depends on the level of the existing relationship. In other words, how well do you know this person? If you have a close relationship already, make an appointment. Again, depending on the relationship, maybe you need to use a go-between to set up a meeting. Perhaps a referral is best, ("so-in-so suggested that I call you...") your approach, however you do it, should be prayerfully thought out.

Once you have set the time for a meeting to discuss your request, be sure to include the following items in your discussion.

This list is not inclusive, but it is a start.

How God is working in your life.

Why you said "YES" to God's invitation to be involved in church planting.

The results from your informal or formal assessment.

The vision God has shared with you so far for involvement in church planting.

Your willingness to be molded by God.

Your willingness to learn from godly mentors.

Ask the potential mentor to pray about serving as your mentor and assure this person that you will be praying for them as well. Schedule a follow-up meeting not more than one week from the first meeting; this should be enough time for the potential mentor to give you an answer. If the potential mentor says no, then continue to be patient and prayerfully start the process again. If the answer is yes, then it is time to think about entering into a covenant relationship.

Part 3—How an Early Stage Church Planter Covenants With a Mentor

What is a Covenant?

We have spent some time expressing the importance of connecting with a mentor in a unique relationship to foster growth. If you agree that this relationship is vital to your development as an early stage church planter, then you will need a framework to assist in the establishing of a healthy mentoring relationship. For believers this framework is often a covenant.

First, let us establish what a covenant is not. For the purposes of mentoring the early stage church planter, a covenant is not a contract or job description. These tools are concerned about tasks and activities to be performed, whereas a covenant is concerned about relationships. In addition, contracts and job descriptions assume failure and describe what happens when performance is below expectations. In an early stage church planter covenant there is the assumption that God is at work in your life and God does not fail. We may fail but that is the perfect time for God to do His greatest work.

A covenant between an early stage church planter and mentor is person-centered. This instrument will focus on relational issues and define the nature of relationships. A covenant helps to clarify that the primary goal in the relationship is the spiritual development of the potential planter. A covenant is also negotiated. It assists two parties to discuss roles, expectations, and accountability within a relationship.

Our definition of a covenant is a negotiated agreement that serves as the basis of relationship between an early stage church planter and his mentor.

Biblical Foundation of Covenant

Hopefully, you are already sensing the need to utilize a covenant in the establishing of a healthy relationship with a mentor. However, you may be wondering if such a relationship is grounded in biblical principles. What follows is a review of how God and His chosen leaders used covenants to establish relationships with God's people.

One of the first things that God did after creating man was establishing a covenant with Adam. In Genesis 2:16-17 God says to Adam, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” God used a covenant relationship to clarify their respective roles, relationship and expectations.

All through Scripture God established covenant relationships with man. Consider the following covenants God made with His chosen leaders:

- Noah—Genesis 9:1-17
- Abraham—Genesis 17:1-16
- Isaac—Genesis 28:13-22
- Israel—Exodus 19:5; 24:2-8
- David—Psalm 89:3, 28, 34

In addition to the examples of God establishing covenants with His people, there are also many illustrations of leaders establishing covenants with the people that God had called them to lead. In Joshua 24:1-25 we find one such covenant relationship established between Joshua and the people of Israel. In this illustration Joshua affirms his values and role of leading God’s people by declaring, “as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (24:15). The people, energized by Joshua’s leadership, are able to respond, “We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God” (24:18).

Take a moment to review these other expressions of covenants between God’s chosen leaders and the people being led:

- Jehoiada—2 Kings 11:9-21
- Hezekiah—2 Chronicles 29:1-19
- Ezra—Ezra 10:1-8

There is no greater portrait of God’s desire to be in a covenant relationship with people than Jesus Christ. When initiating the Lord’s Supper with His disciples Jesus said, “...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Thus, the author of Hebrews is able to proclaim, “...Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant” (7:22).

Today, as members of the body of Christ, we are united in a covenant relationship. In fact, the Baptist Faith and Message states that as a member of a local church you are, “associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel” (2000 Baptist Faith and Message). When we unite with a local church, we are entering into a unique relationship defined by God’s Word.

Covenants are a natural part of the faith we profess. God used them to establish relationships and clarify expectations. Jesus is the very picture of the covenant that God desires with us. We use covenants every day to bring greater health and understanding to relationships inside and outside the fellowship of believers.

Now, you are invited to take a risk and enter into a covenant relationship that could impact your life in a revolutionary way. Our prayer is that you will have courage for the journey that lies ahead.

Elements of a Covenant

Not all mentoring relationships are successful. Often there are unmet expectations, the relationship can begin to deteriorate, or it never seems to end. The mentoring relationship can be disappointing. However, if time is taken to discuss the following elements, the potential for a healthy, life-changing relationship can be enhanced.

Be sure to take time to discuss the following elements with your mentor as you initiate the new relationship:

A Covenant:

Begins with a **common purpose**

Begin by answering the question: “What is the purpose of our relationship?” A clear purpose gives direction to the relationship and clarifies the reason for having this relationship in the first place.

Outlines the **roles** of the persons involved:

At a minimum, this means you and the mentor. Is there anyone else that you think needs to be included in the covenant?

Identifies key elements of the relationship:

These may be expressed as values or promises you and the mentor commit to.

Clarifies expectations:

What can you expect from each other? Include the basics on which a healthy relationship is created: how often you will meet, how you will pray, how you will communicate with each other, how will your spouse be involved, and what will you do to adapt the covenant if necessary.

Includes times for **evaluation and renegotiation:**

It needs to have a starting point and an ending point. Include your expectations of how the formal mentoring relationship will end. Provide a graceful way out of the relationship for both of you if it is not working even after your best efforts. Both of you need to sign it!

Covenant Template

Early Stage Church Planter - Mentor Covenant

Purpose:

Recognizing the powerful potential of a mentoring relationship, we enter this covenant with the goal of helping the early stage church planter achieve his God-given potential.

Roles:

Early Stage Church Planter name _____

Mentor name _____

Values: Our mentoring relationship will be characterized by the following values:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Honesty: | We will speak the truth in love. |
| Confidentiality: | Issues and concerns will not be shared outside this relationship |
| Openness | We will openly share both life and ministry issues with each other. |
| Dependable: | We will be on time for appointments and calls in respect of each other. |
| Preparedness: | We will be prepared in advance of each mentoring encounter. |

Are there other values that you would like to include in your mentoring relationship? If so, list them here:

Expectations:

How will we communicate? (face-to-face, e-mail, phone...)

How often will we communicate? (daily, weekly, monthly)

When will we review this mentoring relationship? (after 6, 9 or 12 months)

How often will we pray for each other? (Consider daily.)

When will this relationship end? (When people group and place for plant are defined? When a project is completed?)

Are there other expectations that you wish to include in your covenant relationship?

Covenant:

Before God and each other, we commit ourselves to this mentoring relationship.

Mentor's Signature and Date

Early Stage Church Planter's Signature and Date

Part 4—Checklist

Check those that you agree with or have completed.

I have:

an understanding that mentoring is biblical and needed.

determined which characteristics are needed in a mentor.

a list of at least 3 potential mentors.

developed a plan to approach a potential mentor (who, when, and where).

a commitment from a potential mentor that I have approached (if the potential mentor said no, then go back to previous step; if the potential mentor says yes, then proceed to next step “covenanting”).

established a covenant with a mentor.

Part 5—Bibliography and Suggested Reading List

As Iron Sharpens Iron—Howard and William Hendricks, Moody Press, 1995

Connecting—J. Robert Clinton, NavPress, 1992

Mentoring—Bobb Biehl, Broadman and Holman, 1997

New Churches Needed, A Step-By-Step Handbook, NAMB

Spiritual Mentoring—Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, InterVarsity Press, 1999