**4 Steps To Mentoring Teens**

After a long night of “studying” I remember wondering whether or not I would encounter Father B on my way back to the dorms.  He was the residential Jesuit at my freshman dorm on Xavier University’s campus.  Each and every time as if he were waiting for me, there he was just hanging out.  As I passed by not wanting to make eye contact, I would hear him say in the most loving and genuine tone, “*Good morning Saint.”*

After some time I found myself regularly meeting with Father B.  At first it was informal and eventually became a mentorship.  It’s because of that relationship that I was able to endure many storms and become the man I am today.  As a youth minister it’s something I strive to do for this next generation.

Mentoring is an essential part to any youth ministry.  While it’s not the first system to establish, it’s one that should eventually be incorporated into what you do.  It’s through mentoring that you can raise up the next generation and teach them to seek out wisdom from those who have traveled the journey ahead of them.

So if you are looking to establish a mentoring program in your ministry it’s important to keep in mind these 4 steps:

1. **Create A Path:** Teenagers are constantly being shaped into what they are supposed to do; however, rarely are they asked, “*Who do you want to be?”*  This is probably the most important question you can ask a teen.  And, it should be the first question you ask when mentoring them.  This question sets a direction and casts a vision.  It helps you know where to go with them.
2. **Give Them Application:** It’s easy to fill someone’s head with knowledge; however, how much they retain can be a mystery.  The more application to your information, the more likely the teen you mentor will remember.  When you mentor someone it’s important to incorporate tangible habits that will lead to personal growth.
3. **Meet Consistently:**  The best way to build a habit is to maintain a sense of consistency.  If there is too much time between each meeting or communication you can’t expect to see exponential growth.  An effective mentoring program is not just a one time deal or something that meets quarterly.  If you want to walk with someone through life you need to make sure you are meeting consistently on a weekly to monthly basis while communicating email or text in between.  The more they are reminded that you are near the more they are reminded what needs to be accomplished.
4. **Sit In Their Messes:** If you really get to know someone sooner or later you are going to witness a disorientation that they are facing.  Mentoring isn’t about fixing someone’s problems or messes, it’s about walking with them through the darkness.  You are not going to have all the answers and that’s okay.  What you can provide for your student is solidarity and sometimes that goes farther than the wisdom you might dump on them.

Since you cannot meet with every student in your ministry one on one it’s important to raise up other mentors to serve alongside of you.  It’s not a ministry that you should start up right away if you are new to youth ministry.  Establish a foundation through small groups, worship and ministry.  It’s with mentoring that you take students deeper, create leaders and set them up for success after they leave school.

**Do you have a mentoring program in your ministry?  If so what does it look like?**

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