

How to Mentor a Christian Child

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Mentors are not extra parents or just supportive friends; they are God-appointed guides that lead children through tough times. Like Paul and Timothy or Elijah and Elisha, mentors teach, instruct and impart to their students, often just one at a time. Mentors transcend these standard relationships with a golden, God-given purpose. Whether you mentor for a summer or several years, you can influence a Christian child and change many lives for the good. Mentoring kids is a rewarding, necessary ministry that a child will always remember.

Who Should Mentor?

Many organizations insist on using mentors that have had formal training. Your church may be one of them. If you aren't sure, ask someone in authority. My training came from ten years of on the job training as a children's pastor. Mentoring came about naturally, as some children seemed to know more, ask more, want more of God. Over the years, I had the opportunity to minister to thousands of children through Sidewalk Sunday Schools, special events and kids' church but some of my most enjoyable experiences were those one-on-one teaching moments with children I mentored. Anyone that wants to serve children quietly, without much applause, could be a mentor.

Which Child Should I Mentor?

It's easy to get attached to a child. Class favorites rise to the top, no matter what they tell you! However, in order for a child to be a candidate for mentorship, he needs to meet important criteria. A God connection!

Is there a God connection between you and the child? Do you see similar specific gifts in the student that would make you a suitable teacher? For example, are you a singer? Does the child like singing with you? This may not be solely an indication but could indicate a possible mentorship. Do you feel prompted to pray for the child more than others and does the child seek you out for help? These could be clues that mentoring possibilities exist.

How to Mentor

Mentorship doesn't have to be announced to the world and can be informal. Sometimes it's best to keep your intentions from the children because it can be a source of jealousy. Especially in small group situations.

Follow those steps to mentoring a Christian child:

- Establish trust. Do what you say you will. Don't promise what you can't do.
- Love unconditionally. Love big and don't exclude other children from your love.
- Talk about the future. Ask the child what his hopes and dreams are in God. How can he serve God today and what would he like to do tomorrow?
- Teach what you know. Impartation of spiritual gifts often occurs by doing. Show the child how you prepare for a lesson, pray for the class or choose a craft. Talk and explain what you are thinking.
- Allow the child to be in the moment. There's also a time when you don't talk, just enjoy the Lord through hearing the gospel or simple worship. Worship God and allow the child to worship with you.
- Find solutions together. Children I mentor often have tough times at home. Together, we find spiritual solutions if even only encouragement to continue in the faith. Don't interfere in the child-parent relationships except in cases of abuse and even then go through the proper channels.
- Involve parents. You don't have to make a big announcement about mentoring but be friendly to parents. Include them, welcome them and make them feel as if you are part of their team.
- Prepare for good-bye. Eventually good-bye will come, it's the natural course of things. This could be the child's graduation to an older class or the family moves away. Know that God will water the seeds you planted and provide you with a harvest long after the child is grown. Be ready to let go when it is time.

Read more from Mimi at her blog, [Encouragement for Christians](#).

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In "Encouragement & Vision"

