

Mentoring Matters

published by  Ministry Quest, a program of  Biblical Seminary

February 23, 2009

The Student's Voice – I have developed a heart for community even more so than I already had, and I my understanding of God has become one of a God who shows up within community. I have been able to see God clearly through living with so many amazing people. When Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am with them," I think he was making a point that Christianity is not a journey to be walked alone, but rather in community, even if only with two or three people. - Joel

Two self-discovery tools from the SYS Retreat

At the SYS retreat Rhonda Dueck taught a session on **spiritual gifts**. In her teaching she pointed out that **our passions** direct us where we are best suited to serve, **our spiritual gifts** help us determine what we should do when we serve, and **our personal style** will help us figure out how we will serve. There are no right or wrong passions, spiritual gifts or personal styles. These are what make us unique and help us understand our personal calls. Rhonda's recurring encouragement is, **when we know WHOSE we are and WHO we are, then WHAT we do flows naturally.**

Students filled out the Wagner-Modified Houts survey to help them discover their gifts. The reality is that we can 'give' ourselves any gifts we want when we fill out these kinds of questionnaires. Survey results were then tested in community as students gathered in their fall groups to share their findings and affirm the gifts they have seen in each other. We believe gifts are always expressed and confirmed in community. Take some time to go over the results of the gift assessment with your student and give feedback in the areas where you see their gifts emerging. Spiritual gifts bear the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

MQ has been using **Career Direct as our career guidance system** of choice for the past 4 years. *Career Direct* is one of the few assessment tools that approaches the field of career guidance from a biblical perspective. Most career assessments examine just one or two areas. *Career Direct* examines four essential components of career selection: personality, interests, skills, and values. If your student has not yet shared his or her findings from the *Career Direct* survey with you, please ask him or her about it.

MQW– What have I learned about myself? How does this make me a better disciple?

Two strong mentoring tools

As described by Laura Whitworth, Henry & Karen Kimsey-House and Phillip Sandahl in their book Co-Active Coaching (Davies-Black Publishing, CA. 2007)

Use your curiosity

Recently I came across the quote below in my reading. As my husband and I were discussing the use of curiosity as a discovery tool, I realized that it is the perfect solution for a judgmental spirit. Every time he would say something I didn't agree with I would muse about what the underlying reason for his opinion and asked him another question. Instead of writing off his ideas, I was using curiosity to tease out the reason for his opinion. It proved to be a non-threatening way to build understanding. The conversation became dialogue as together we explored the issue.

"Curiosity starts with a question. The interesting thing about a question is that it automatically causes us to start looking. For example, when you read the question Is it cold outside today or hot? Chances are that you instantly started thinking about the weather in your town. We have this Pavlovian response to a question. It nearly always throws us in the direction of the question, looking for an answer. Simply posing the question shifts the focus of the conversation. Being curious has the same effect. Coaches naturally draw their clients' attention to those things they both become curious about – like what brings the client alive or what is in the way. And yet, being curious about these aspects of the client's life is not the same as gathering information. Curiosity is a different way of discovering. There is a big difference between conventional questions that elicit information and curious questions that evoke personal exploration. The following examples illustrate the differences between the two types of questions:

Information Gathering	Curious
What topics will you include in the report?	What will finishing the report give you?
How much exercise do you need each week?	What would "being fit" look like for you?
What training options are available?	What do you want to know that you don't know today?

In coaching, the ideal is to ask truly curious questions with a curious frame of mind. The curious coach doesn't have all the answers. When you are curious, you are no longer in the role of expert. Instead, you are joining clients in a quest to find out what's there. You are exploring their world with them, not superimposing your world on theirs. It is like looking at their world through the wondering eyes of a child. With curiosity, we have the experience of exploring, uncovering, digging around, considering, reflecting. This is the learning that leads to sustainable change and growth. Keep in mind that we are talking about curiosity for the sake of the client's discovery and decision-making, not the coach's discovery and problem solving.

Curiosity is a talent. Some people are endowed with a stronger sense of curiosity than others. Curiosity can be developed through practice."

Co-Active Coaching, pp. 69-75.

Listening – more than meets the ear

Some people are naturally good listeners – you know the kind – they make you feel important and heard by their comments and body language. If they are not really interested in what you have to say, you will never know it, because they don't let on! Others of us need to work at developing good listening skills. Our lack of attention gives us away immediately. The good news is that practice makes us better.

I have recently come across the following description of listening levels:

We listen with the focus on ourselves. These conversations go something like this: You said, then I said, then you said... Sometimes they evolve into "I didn't say..." or "That reminds me of this story..." In a nutshell, we listen on a superficial level, focusing on ourselves and judging what the other person is saying. We spend more time thinking about our response than what the other person is saying. This is everyday kind of listening.

The second level of listening is **focusing in on the other person**; being aware of their expressions, tone, and body language. We observe what is not being said aloud. We hear what is between the words. We suspend our need to have a response ready the moment the other person takes a breath. At this listening level other distractions fade.

The third level of listening builds on level 2 and is sometimes not easily distinguished from it. It is the deeper level that adds an awareness of the environment **using all your senses**. It is being tuned in to the nuances, like the emotions and energy levels surrounding you. Listening at this level will help you respond most effectively to your mentee. It will give you clues to questions to ask. Most of us don't operate at this level for very long and easily slip back into the first level. A good mentor will be aware of this and recover as quickly as possible.