

IF YOU HIT THE DOLDRUMS...



Some mentors and mentees begin with good momentum, only to discover a couple of months into their relationship that they could use some more focus or energy in their conversations. Here are some ideas to consider:

- You may want to **attend lectures or other events on Hope's campus with your student** from time to time, as a way to get to know each other better and/or to find some common ground for conversation. Your student will probably have some ideas of events and lectures that would be of interest to him/her. You can also check Hope's calendar of events online: <http://www.hope.edu/calendar/>
- **To help your student think more about his/her own calling**, you may want to discuss what you thought you wanted to be when you were a child. How has that changed over the years? What do you know about your gifts? How did you discover more about your gifts? The student can then share a bit from his/her own childhood through to the present.
- We have also found that students respond well to **Frederick Buechner's definition of vocation as "the place where your deepest joy meets the world's deepest hunger."**
 - You can explore with your student what they've done so far in their life that seems to bring them deep joy (another way of asking this question: What would you love to do with your time if you didn't have to worry about making money for a living?).
 - You can also explore how their joy and gifts match up with the needs of the world.
- Other **calling-related questions** to consider: How do you feel about your calling to be a student right now? What has led you to think about ministry as a possible calling in the future? What other callings are you thinking about? Do you have a sense that God could use your gifts in a variety of settings, even in work places that are not explicitly Christian? How do you see the callings of marriage, family, community, and church-involvement fitting into your work-related callings?
- As you progress in your relationship and your student proceeds into his/her internship, **you may want to focus on identifying the student's gifts in ministry.** What about the internship setting is life-giving and what is draining? What aspects of the internship give the student energy or a special sense of joy? What kind of feedback is the supervisor giving the student about his/her gifts?
- To further explore gifts, your student can do some **strengths and personality assessment** through Career Services, which you could then process with him/her. Information about these assessments is available to the student through Hope's Career Services website. You can also find personality tests online at such sites as www.keirseych.com. Some denominations have spiritual gifts tests online as well.
- Eventually, you could encourage the student to **write a personal mission statement** in light of how the student has grown to understand more of his/her callings. You could then discuss how the student can be intentional about that mission in his/her life now and into the future.

- Another session can focus on how the student is doing with his or her **friendships and relationships**. Aelred of Rievaulx was a monk who lived in England in the 1100s and wrote about spiritual friendship. In one place he wrote:

Nor must all those whom we love be received into our friendship, since not everyone is worthy of it... For a friend is the sharer of your soul, to your friend's spirit you join and attach your own, and you so mingle the two that you would like for your two spirits to become one. Since this is so, you first choose someone whom you think to be comfortable to these qualities, and then you test this person, and only then do you admit him to your friendship.

Discuss whether you and your mentee agree with his thoughts on what should guide friendship. How does that compare to how the student has thought about or chosen friends in the past? 1 Peter 1:22 states, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart." Do you have friends who know and love you deeply in Christ? What guidelines do you have for those you choose to be your closest friends? Are you that kind of friend to them? Do you struggle to stay connected with all of your different friends? How does technology play a role in your friendships, near and far?

- You may also want to talk with your student about his/her **hopes and dreams for marriage**.
 - In his reflections on marriage, Keith Anderson writes that, "some of the most important characteristics necessary for marriage are found in good friendships. A good friend invests in you, invests time, energy and attention. A friend is loyal and will tell you the truth, even when it hurts. A close friend trusts you, delights in you and simply enjoys being together and 'hanging out.'" He also believes it's important that two people getting married are "soul friends—those who recognize that a central purpose of marriage is what some have called 'soul-making': the development of a shared relationship with Jesus Christ."
 - You may want to use these thoughts on marriage to reflect with your student on what is important about marriage and a spouse. You should also feel free to draw in your own experiences and wisdom.
 - You may also want to ask some of the following questions: What are your hopes for what you will find in a spouse – think about things like faith commitment, personality traits, common interests, callings. How does your sense of what you value in a close friend compare with or contrast to what you value in a marriage partner? Do you think God has "the one" chosen for us? Can you think of any marriages that provide a picture of what you would like your marriage to be like? If so, would you need to change something about yourself to be more similar to this model? Do you have people in your life who give you counsel as you date and think about marriage?
 - You can also reflect on what Genesis 2: 24 implies about the characteristics of marriage and a marriage partner when this scripture states, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."