

TOOLS: ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

Josh Miller and Luke Burgis discuss “Mentoring with Empathy” in their book *Unrepeatable: Cultivating the unique calling of every person*. The two big movements in a mentoring relationship are “reaching out (asking good questions) and actively receiving (listening deeply).” Sometimes it feels easier to listen and receive than to ask really good questions that get the conversation started. The questions presented here are suggestions for you; the list is very far from exhaustive. This just gets us started. The grease for the wheel, so to speak. Take a few minutes before a meeting with your mentee to think about the course of the conversation and what questions will help you get to your destination.

When getting to know someone: What do you like to do? What do you like about where you live? Why did you choose that course of study? What do you like about your job? If your friend described you to me, what do you think she would say? Describe something funny that happened to you. Have you ever had a moment of clearly seeing God’s hand in your life? What did that look like? What do you do to practice your faith? Who are your favorite saints/why?

If you are discussing an activity or accomplishment: Describe what you actually did. What did you learn from that experience? What did you enjoy about it? How did you address any challenges that came up? What is something that was hard for you that you accomplished? What happened?

For decision-making: How will you make that decision? What factors are most important to you? What information do you need to make a great decision? Does this decision align with your passions and values? Are there any fears influencing your decision?

For affirmation: (these questions are for the mentor to consider when affirming the personhood of the mentee) What do I want to affirm about her efforts or commitment? Has she made progress since we last met? What is she doing that I see will lead to future success? What future do I see for this person that she may not have the confidence to see for herself?

For creating action steps: What could you do (which is different from want to do and will do--you can ask those questions as the conversation progresses)? Which of these options do you want to pursue? Is that a step you want to take? Are there any obstacles to getting this done that you want to address? Do you need any accountability on this?