

Life’s Better with a Friend/Mentor

Introverts, extroverts, men, women, young, and old, all agree that it’s awesome to have friends.  With a friend, the hard times are easier to bear and the happy times are even cheerier.  The right friends actually bring out the best in you.  Wouldn’t it be great to have just such a friend to walk with you for a little while during your short-term mission journey?  I would call that friend a *mentor*, and I think every short-termer, no matter how young or old, needs one!

As a mentor prays with you and listens to you, they provide strength, courage, and encouragement.  When they preview your support letter, they become a second set of eyes. When you need help stuffing your support letter, or collecting items for your mission, they are a second pair of hands.  They can help you think through your preparations, pray for you while you are on your mission, and then ask great questions once you return.  And all along the journey, your mentor can help make sure you are accountable to being in the Word, to serving in your church, and to making sure you fulfill all of the requirements of being a part of your short-term mission.

While people seem to like the idea of having a mentor, I find that folks shy away from asking someone for these reasons:

* They feel self-conscious asking someone to give of their time, or that it may seem self-serving.  But there truly are people who would be honored to walk with you on this journey, and in fact it may well be the path that God has designed for that friend as a part of Great Commission ministry.
* They think they need to find someone “older and wiser,” maybe a pastor, elder, Bible scholar, or theologian.  But the person you choose can be a family member or friend, any age, and in any station of life.
* They’re not sure what a mentor should do.  But there are resources, such as “The MFM Mentor Guide,” that provide questions and actions that will empower the mentor.

While you don’t have to look for a rocket scientist, there are some characteristics that you should look for when choosing a mentor. You should seek out someone you respect, who you are willing to spend time with, and who is willing to spend time with you. A mentor should be:

* A person of prayer
* A person of integrity (they will do what they say will do)
* A faithful servant in the church
* A person who will commit to at least two months of ministry with you
* A person who is not afraid to ask hard questions, and who is good at just listening when you need to share

Pray about who you might ask.  While you wait for God’s answer, see if you can get your hands on a resource like “[The Next Steps Mentor Guide](http://www.thenextmile.org/storage/downloads/mentor-guide.pdf),” so when your mentor says, “Yes,” you can hand them the tools they will need.  Be ready to be blessed AND to be a blessing!