

Needing a mentor, being a mentor

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April 3, 2012

I've been [reading](#) and [thinking](#) a lot about mentors lately. I thought this article was awesome: [Get Ahead with a Mentor Who Scares You](#):

"You're the best!" the four *American Idol* contestants cried to their voice coach Patty after narrowly escaping elimination, "We couldn't have done it without you!" As they celebrated, I couldn't help but notice that their hero was the same irascible, no-holds-barred woman who had been shown yelling and screaming at the same contestants just minutes earlier, leaving her devastated charges in tears.

With the group's success, Patty's tough-love approach was validated (much more clearly, perhaps, than that of the show's previous tough-love artist Simon Cowell). Though her tactics were questionable, they certainly brought out the best in her team; she truly helped them to become better singers and performers. I'm not saying that you should go out and be like Patty, but if you're young, ambitious and motivated, you should take a page from that foursome.

Go out and find the most qualified or talented mentor, coach, or manager you can, and subject yourself to everything they can throw at you.

The comments rightly caution against a mentor who is abusive. I'm not interested in being yelled at. After all, my kids will be teens before I know it...

But I love the basic idea. Over my 12+ years in ministry, lay and ordained, I've had a number of nurturing and supportive mentors and guides—spiritual directors, coaches and professors.

Now I'm ready for someone to scare the bejesus out of me. Or scare the Jesus into me.

I'd like a mentor who assigns me challenging work to do. Who is constantly reinventing herself in ministry. Who understands that good pastoral leaders are as much futurists as they are caregivers and consensus-builders. Who is where I'd like to be on this writing/pastoring journey.

'Trouble is... I'm not sure I know anyone who fits that bill. Or who would be open to that kind of relationship. Do you? If not, I wonder what it says about the church that that's the case.

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On the other side of the equation, I will be mentoring a woman who is newly graduated from seminary. I'm not interested in scaring her. She's looking for someone to guide and hold her accountable to her own goals and process. I'm excited, because she's an awesome person and is going to be an incredible minister, and to the extent that I can help her along her way, it's a great honor.

As I begin this process, though, I have a couple of questions for you, Gentle Readers of all persuasions:

Have you had a mentoring relationship that was helpful? Would you be willing to talk to me about that?

Have you ever wanted a mentor and not been able to find one? What stood in the way?

Have you ever been a mentor? If not, what has stood in your way?

*Originally posted at [The Blue Room](#)*