

SESSION STANDARDS AND CALENDAR SETTING

If there is one thing that makes mentoring effective, other than the fact that it is the model Jesus used, it is the establishment and enforcement of standards, clear expectations that are set and enforced.

ATTENDANCE

At the first meeting, you set your group's calendar for the entire year. You build your group's calendar around yours to begin with; avoiding dates when you're out of town, busy or otherwise unavailable. You set dates for the retreat and for the monthly meetings, collaborating calendars until you get a date that works with everyone. It is recommended that you allow somewhere around four weeks between meetings in order for the women to have the time needed to complete homework assignments. You leave the first meeting with the calendar for the entire year confirmed.

But what happens when things come up?

The process to change a meeting date is really simple. The person who has the conflict has to do all the legwork to arrange a new date. First, she must come to you and clear a new date on your calendar. Next, she must coordinate with all the other women. If ANY ONE PERSON can't change to the new date, then the date has to remain as it was originally set, and the woman with the problem has to deal with her problem. Usually, that means she has to pass up some opportunity or miss a meeting that she needed to be at.

But what happens when she comes back and says, "Hey, I tried to change our meeting date but could not. So I need to ask you if it's o.k. for me not to be there?"

Here's where you have to lead.

Everyone signed a covenant saying they'd be at every meeting. They have coordinated their calendars with each other and with you months in advance. The covenant states that the mentee will attend every meeting unless deterred by "serious illness" or "divine providence". If they choose to miss a meeting, love them and move on.

TIMELINESS

This is the second area of standards that are part of successful mentoring. The covenant says everyone will be on time for every meeting. Our culture has become very forgiving of people being late. Everyone "understands" there are travel delays, meetings that run long, etc. And as peers, there's a lot of grace given on this one.

However, as a mentor, your time is precious. And when one person is 10 minutes late to a mentoring group that includes a mentor and 6 other women, then 80 minutes have been wasted. That's almost an hour and a half of precious time.

So how do you establish this standard?

It's all done at the first meeting.

If someone is late, and invariably someone will be, here's what you do. At one minute before you are to start, say "O.K., it's time to get started." That will communicate to the women who are on time that you noticed and that you appreciate it. Then begin your agenda. When the person who is late arrives, just greet her but continue wherever you were in the agenda.

Women will make it a high priority to be on time if you'll set the standard in your first meeting. And similarly, don't let up. Make it a big deal to start each meeting on time!

If everyone is on time? Do the same thing...start exactly on time. And make the first thing you say something like, "Thank you for being on time. It's very important that we respect everyone by being here on time. Congratulations. Keep it up." Then begin the meeting. In addition, always make sure you end the meeting on time.

HOMEWORK

Homework is the third place where standards must be set. Mentees need to know that when you assign them homework, it's to be done. Homework usually involves four things: 1) a book to read and an assignment with the book, 2) scripture to memorize by topic, 3) a marriage focus including a marriage exercise and date night (for married groups) and 4) a peer challenge. Here's how you set and enforce standards on all four.

The accountability for reading the book each month comes from the assignment related to the book. Each mentee is expected to read the assigned book and write a one-page summary or answer questions detailing what she took away from the book and intends to apply to her life. This is not a book report, and it certainly is not a critique of the book or the author. Instead, it should be the "takeaways" that God impresses upon her. In other words, it should be the application of the book to her life.

Each woman is required to bring copies of her written one-page summary to the meeting.

The discussion of the book needs to be brief and concise. It does NOT include judgment of the book or the author. "This book was too long" or "He could have said this so much more concisely"... those kinds of comments are not what the book discussion is about.

Scripture memory accountability is a little less subtle. The mentor will call on one of the women to quote the assigned Scripture. She will do so conversationally but BY TOPIC, because that's the way you want them to remember and apply God's Word. Randomly calling on your women to quote the assigned Scriptures by topic, including those from previous sessions, is THE way to insure they memorize and stay fresh on the Scriptures. No one wants to be embarrassed by not knowing the Scripture verses. It's important they memorize the Scriptures including the reference... the "book, chapter, and verse." That way, they're not "free forming" or paraphrasing it; and they know where to go look for the surrounding verses to put the verse in context and understand it totally.

Titus2 Mentoring

As you move into the year, a good way to have the women review is to put the different Scripture references in a small container and pass it around, having each woman pick one or two Scriptures. Then go around the group and have each woman quote the verse to each other. At the end of the year, the women will be able to recall all the verses they have memorized because they have reviewed them each month.

You may feel a little like you are flashing back to “Sunday school” or “sword drills”, but what you’re doing is purposely helping them “hide His Word in their hearts.” Post-mentoring surveys show that scripture memory and application is one of the most valuable parts of mentoring, even several years later.

The final homework pieces are the marriage focus and the peer challenge that you will assign each month. You will simply ask the women to share what they have learned from the assignments, and go around the group to insure everyone shares and thus, everyone is held accountable.

In summary, the value of the year will largely be determined by the investment each woman makes in the program. Therefore, it’s extremely important for you to encourage and exhort the young women to follow through with their commitments!