

Gen Z Speaks: Mentor My Generation

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Gen Z Speaks is a collection of writings from members of Generation Z. These articles are written by young adults for young adult leaders.

My generation is looking for good, godly mentors. Good mentors are gifts, but sometimes they seem hard to find. I've been blessed with several key mentors. My friends are often jealous of my relationship with these mentors. My friends crave the kind of intimacy and closeness my mentors have offered me. They need people like you!

I know what you are thinking: *Great! I can't add one more thing to my schedule. I know it's important, but I have no idea what I'm doing or how I can fit it into my schedule.*

You aren't alone. Potential mentors often shy away from taking us on because they can't imagine they have the margin for it. Ministry is demanding. I get it, you don't want to commit to one more biweekly meeting at a coffee shop and then have to develop meeting agendas, reading lists, or read more yourself. Sadly, the mentors who could do it *well* may be the ones who are *doing* it the least.

Good news! We're not asking for that. In fact, you may not need to add much to your workload to be a good mentor. You don't have to squeeze more appointments into your already packed schedule. You may not have to give up anything else.

1. Let us do life *with* you.

Keep your other appointments, but invite us along when you can. Take us with you to your kids' soccer games, and then talk about life and godliness while we're sitting on the sideline. Invite us to run errands with you. Let us listen to your phone calls in the car. Invite us to your speaking engagements or big events, and we'll watch how you engage with people on and off stage. Let us eat with you, shop with you, minister with you, work out with you, and even work around your house with you. The key here is "with you."

Some of my best mentorship conversations happened while wrapping Christmas presents or doing dishes with my mentor. I will never forget when she called me late one night to ask me if I wanted to go to Walmart with her. Of course, I said yes and dropped what I was doing! That night she shared important ministry insights with me on the chip aisle! Almost as memorable was when we had a profound conversation about the mission of the Church in DSW while shopping for her daughter's school shoes. This is effective and appealing mentorship for my generation. And it requires much less of you when you are intentional about inviting us along.

2. Use what you are learning and experiencing yourself to teach us.

Don't stress about creating a learning action plan. You don't have to study something to prepare to mentor us. You don't have to come up with a long, complicated list of discussion questions or a reading schedule. Don't create more work for yourself. Share a book you've already read and know well or one you are currently reading. It can be more powerful to hear you process your own learning with us. Share what you are learning.

Use shared experiences to teach us. Recently, I was sitting next to my pastor at a funeral. In the middle of the ceremony, he sent me a very profound text message in response to something the preacher said from the stage. It was practical and useful, and it flowed straight from real life. Life-giving conversations and teaching moments naturally flow from things that happen in day-to-day life. They carry more impact, because we get to see the implications of what you are teaching. You don't always have to tediously plan out times to sit down and preach to us about different topics. Be consistent and intentional, but let learning opportunities come organically and authentically. Don't force it.

3. Be a normal, real person.

You don't have to make yourselves relatable to be a mentor. You already are relatable because you live a complex life with both exciting moments and mundane ones. When you let us do life with you, we get to see both. We want to see the real and the raw aspects of your life.

It takes humility and vulnerability on your part. But if you aren't willing to be humble and vulnerable, how will you replicate that in us? We want mentors who are wise and experienced, of course. But your daily rhythms and routines should speak of your wisdom and experience. Watching you live out the principles you preach is powerful.

You can recommend a book on marriage to us, or you can let us watch you and your spouse interact at home. You can let us see how you have fun together and handle conflict in real time. You can talk at us about good parenting, but you could also let us spend time with your kids. Their behavior will surely validate (or invalidate) your parenting skills! You can preach to us about good work and rest habits, but you would do better to let us see how you pace your own days from start to finish. You can teach us about finance, but would you dare to let us see your spending and saving habits?

4. Have fun.

Getting to do life together opens the door for so many fun, nonserious moments with mentors. This is huge for young adults. We don't want to be serious all the time! We don't want to meet twice a month to talk about our insecurities, faults, and failures for an hour straight. Who does? We want to do fun things with you! We want to laugh with you! My mentors have even been vulnerable enough to let me laugh at them when they mess up. They knew that I was learning from their mistakes in those moments even if I didn't know it at the time. We want mentors who build relationships outside of

just work or ministry. Don't be afraid to let your conversations with us flow from your thoughts about spiritual disciplines straight to the show you have been bingeing on Netflix.

Wanting good mentorship may not be unique to my generation, but we want mentorship that is personal and unforced. We want spiritual direction and discipleship to come from intimate and open conversations. We value your discernment and wisdom, but we value your vulnerability just as much. We know you're busy, so look for ways that you can invite us in without moving anything around in your schedule. Those of us who are in it for the right reasons will take advantage of any time we get to spend with you. We will watch and learn from you, even in—especially in—the mundane and ordinary moments.