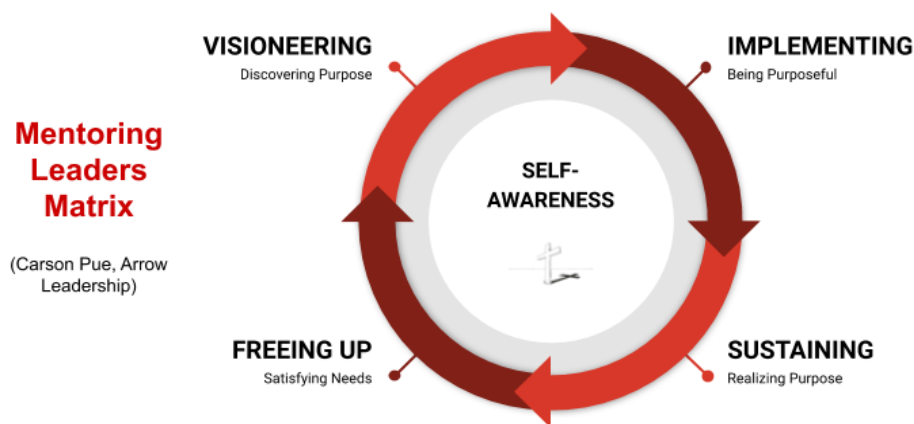


THE MENTORING MATRIX

Pue, Carson. 2005. Mentoring Leaders. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Is there a particular pattern to the mentoring process?

Carson Pue believes there is “a pattern and flow of developing leaders in a transformational manner” (Pue, 2005, 19) that he describes as a mentoring matrix. In this article, I plan to summarize the five phases that are outlined at the beginning of his book ***Mentoring Leaders*** (pages 19-23), and draw some brief observations from each phase for the mentoring role and task.



The first phase of the mentoring matrix is “Self-Awareness.” Pue suggests that self-awareness is at the very core of the development of a leader, and states that it must be “an accurate self-awareness, not simply of your abilities, gifts and skills, but also of the shadow side of your life as a leader.” The second part of that statement hints at one of the significant challenges developing leaders face, and one of the significant, but challenging opportunities that we have as we mentor these young leaders - confronting the “shadow side of...life.” Therefore, central to this phase of self-awareness is the cross, and an appreciation that leaders must have absolute clarity on who they are as children of God. The application then is about finding and being secure in our identity in Christ. Pue then sketches a process of three parts - 1) becoming aware of who you are; 2) understanding why you do what you do; and 3) discovering and applying a solid theological foundation for your identity in Christ.

Phase two is “Freeing Up.” Pue describes this phase by saying, “Increased self-awareness usually leads to an awareness of things holding us back - obstacles that must be overcome or bonds that need to be broken.” This phase is perhaps best described as responding appropriately to the discoveries of self that are made. The process of discovery may call for additional exploration, and may require students to explore areas of life, experience and history that need to be further addressed. This journey inward must almost certainly require vigilance in prayer by both students and mentors, asking God to reveal areas that may be holding the student back. Pue points out two possible signs as indicators - fear and hurt - noting specifically the resulting bondage that is often attached to circumstances, unhealed wounds, or spiritual wanderings. A healthy process of application is outlined that includes first helping leaders search for and understand their core needs as an individual and as a leader, and second, helping them understand these needs and evaluate where they are turning to have these needs met. He also reminds us that many times we are guilty

of trying to meet these needs ourselves rather than turning to God and allowing Him to meet our needs.

The challenge of mentoring these first two phases is the expectation it places on both students and mentors that is outside the perceived boundaries of conventional education. Mentoring will require growing depth in our relationship with the student, probably challenging each of us individually to settle in at a level of pastoral care appropriate to our role of exercising and communicating discernment, wisdom, compassion and perhaps even personal vulnerability, as we provide the gentle insight and correction needed in the student's journey. I would emphasize that this role and responsibility reflects one of the key facets of successfully developing the next generation of faithful ministry leaders.

Moving on, Pue begins his description of phase three, "Visioneering" with a warning of sorts. He says,

"Let me state this strongly: You cannot skip steps in this process without making the mentoring somewhat shallow. In fact, if you jump to visioneering without having a clear understanding of self, or things holding you back, you may be wasting your time, or even damaging your training if the vision is implemented without a solid foundation." (p.22).

He defends this warning as warranted because visioneering is one of the more exciting phases for students and mentors, and there is real temptation to bypass the process presented in the previous two phases. Pue goes on to affirm that visioneering is very energizing, saying,

"There are few things more fulfilling for a mentor than to see the eyes of the mentee when they begin to gain clarity and focus on God's vision for the mentee's life. There is a change in the mentee's spirit, countenance and energy level, and it is often exemplified by a renewed passion." (p.22)

He summarizes, "We want every leader to get to this place, and it is a fun time of mentoring - but we must not short circuit the process."

I would press pause here to consider further Pue's comment that our mentoring may be reduced in effectiveness, or "shallow" if steps are skipped. The balance that we are tasked to maintain represents one of the critiques leveled at conventional theological education that a competency-based program like *Immerse* seeks to address and overcome - personal attention given to identifying, addressing and overcoming the human and internal components of ministry leadership that left unattended could at minimum hinder, and at its extreme, disqualify someone from effective ministry leadership. In a very practical way, the next generation(s) of ministry leadership demands that we seek to instill integrity of character in our training. Two core values of CBTE (competency-based theological education) support this directly: the value of Integrated Outcomes and Assessment, highlighting the knowledge, proficiency and character components outlined in every outcome and competency; and the value of Direct Assessment of Mastery, highlighting the development and demonstration of mastery of competency to the mentor team, including character components, while allowing time and flexibility in program completion for the adequate shaping of character components. I would further comment that we do our students and our congregations harm by being neglectful in our role, which requires us to be mindful of this important responsibility. That being said, we are hopeful and confident that the right balance may

be found in our practice, benefitting both students and the ministry calling. Take time to explore and reflect.

The next phase of the Mentoring Matrix described in *Mentoring Leaders* is “Implementing.” The strength of the Immerse training model is evident in this phase of mentoring as it is described as the stage where we walk alongside leaders and help them strategically begin to step out in leadership toward the developing vision. In this phase, individual mentors’ expertise and experience is brought to bear as mentors assist and advise implementation - organizational design and development, exercise of leadership skill, involvement in strategic planning as well as learning about and applying team strategies and team building. Practically, it is often important for young leaders to see the incremental steps required to fulfill a vision.

The final phase of the Mentoring Matrix is “sustaining.” While the core essence of the Immerse program focuses mostly on the phases preceding this final phase, understanding this phase is vital to helping leaders embarking on ministry careers to be prepared for the challenges inherent in sustaining themselves in ministry. It focuses on helping the leader know how to lead and continue to sustain the vision as it grows and succeeds. It also prepares the emerging leader to understand the possible undercurrents which may undermine long-term success and fruitfulness in ministry - undercurrents like restlessness and the desire to move on as the excitement of visioning and strategic implementation appear to draw to an end.

Allow me to highlight a significant learning point that is identified here regarding the practicality of the matrix model by asking the question, “Where does the restlessness and desire to move on come from?” Pue directs us back to the core of the mentoring matrix, challenging student and mentor to consider at a deeper level what they are learning about who they are. These new insights into their self-awareness may lead to additional things in their person or spirit that need to be freed up.

The main point of insight is this: the mentoring matrix model needs to be more than a circular journey for us as we develop leaders. Pue suggests viewing it as a three dimensional model - a vertical helix, like a spiral staircase, one that shows both new learning and evidence of students growing closer to God with each cycle through the mentoring phases. Pue points out additional value in viewing the matrix in this way as insight is gained more quickly when placed within the context and history of previous experiences, with the result being that each preceding cycle through the matrix takes the leader to a greater and greater depth of understanding and maturity. The result is a seasoned, self-aware leader with a sharp focus and calling, and the strategic expertise to carry out the vision.

As I bring this to a close, allow me to offer some additional thoughts. First of all, I think it important to see the mentoring matrix as more than just an option for designing a pathway or two. It really helps define the mentoring process, with practical insight into the development of knowledge, character, and skill throughout all phases. Second, I think it is important to prepare ourselves to recognize and identify moments of insight that take us back to the centre of the matrix - new points of self-awareness, new circumstances that call for submission to the gospel and an established identity in Christ, and new milestones where the emerging leader is released and freed to effective leadership and ministry. Finally, I would draw attention to the realization that the matrix process may, in fact, be worked through multiple times in the student’s learning journey, so as well as giving us an overarching process to help us begin and navigate the student’s *Immerse* journey, it can also guide in our day to day, week to week, and month to month practice of mentoring.