What It Means to Be a Man
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I think I saved the best for last—mentoring. We all recognize that it is a valuable skill, but so few people take the time necessary to do it correctly. It is time consuming, requires patience and perseverance, and is not always rewarded by the mentee actually following the advice provided. The young do not always see the value in a mentor, so they do not seek one out, or at least I did not. We believe we have all the answers and then realize over time that we do not. As we get busier in life, the time to conduct this activity for oneself or others evaporates unless it is specifically placed on the schedule and held there in spite of other items attempting to crowd it out. As we advance in our careers, there are “gatekeepers” who prevent people from gaining access to us when they might really need it. Because of these factors, those who hold the bulk of the corporate knowledge for their organization often wonder why those new to the work make the decisions they do—some of which seem to be completely counterproductive. If we have not taken the time to sit down with them and explain the
finer points of the job, what works and what does not after a lifetime of experience, should we be surprised at the results? This is assuming they will listen, of course.

The formal definition of the term, *mentoring* (v.), refers to a reciprocal learning relationship between a mentor and mentee who agree to a partnership, where they work collaboratively toward mutually defined goals that will develop a mentee’s skills, abilities, knowledge, and critical thinking/decision making.¹ What does mentoring involve? Time and the ability to listen objectively without harshly judging the mentee. It also requires patience, wisdom, and maybe most importantly empathy. In effect, it requires many of the things discussed in this book. It also requires the right fit—mentor and mentee—with regard to personality types and values. When the fit happens naturally, the relationship can be fantastic and productive for both. A mentoring relationship without the fit never really comes to fruition. If we can find the fit and use the skills mentioned above, we can achieve what is perhaps one of the best definitions of mentoring that was provided by Oprah Winfrey in a television interview in 2002: “A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself. A mentor is someone who allows you to know that no matter how dark the night, in the morning, joy will come. A mentor is someone who allows you to see the higher part of yourself when sometimes it becomes hidden to your own view.”²

We should always seek to mentor those coming along behind us and it should not always be through the spoken word—personal interaction. The mentor should not do all the talking. Some call this lecturing, and it simply does not work in this environment. It may also be the least effective way to truly mentor someone. Benjamin Frank-

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² Oprah Winfrey, interview with WCVB-TV 5 News CityLine, Boston, MA, 13 January 2002.
lin is often credited with saying, “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn.” The essence is that we need to determine what works for those we seek to mentor and find a way to inspire them. If we can kindle in them the desire to be the best human they can be, nothing can quench that fire or do more to maintain the drive and momentum to sustain it for the years required to come. This intrinsic motivation comes from each person’s internal satisfaction in contrast with the extrinsic motivation that is driven by the need for external reward. It can also encourage them to be inspired to mentor those new to an organization or industry. I have often mentored younger Marines, and the only thing I ever ask from them is to pay it forward by doing the same for others.

A word of caution here though. If we are honest in our intent as we mentor those around us, we must accept it when they do not follow the advice given. It is their choice as to what they do with the information they are offered. Mentoring should not be an attempt to make another version of yourself. As Steven Spielberg said, “The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.” In essence, the goal is to shed a little light on the path of life ahead for them based on our own knowledge and experiences. Since it is their life, it is entirely up to them what they do with that knowledge. Andrew Marshall was exceptionally good at mentoring those around him, and the

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3 There is no real evidence that Benjamin Franklin ever said this publicly. The earliest partial match to the overall meaning can be seen in the writings of Xunzi, a Confucian philosopher who lived in the third century BCE. Several English versions have been published as well. See Xunzi, “The Achievements of the Ru,” in The Complete Text, trans. Eric L. Hutton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
number of prominent figures in recent history who can be considered Marshall's protégé's is astounding, including Richard B. “Dick” Cheney, Donald H. Rumsfeld, and Paul D. Wolfowitz.\(^6\)

Another aspect of mentoring that is often overlooked is the example that we set for others in how we live. How do we treat others? What is important to us as demonstrated by how we spend our time? Do the words we speak, especially when mentoring someone, match the actions that we take? Nothing kills a mentoring message faster than when we demonstrate the adage, “do as I say, not as I do.”\(^7\) We must live up to the words we use for them to have their best effect, especially on those we mentor. When I was a young company commander, my battalion commander was one of the most professional people I have had the privilege of working with and he inspired me to be a much better professional through his words and actions. The officer who took over the battalion after him was just as good, if not better. Both went on to become four-star generals and achieved amazing success during their careers. Both were constant examples of living up to the requirements of being a member of the profession of arms.

We should also be open to being mentored as well, regardless of age or rank, as it is better to learn from what others have done than to learn by personal trial and error. This old proverb has been attributed to many different people, but it fits well here. It says a wise man learns from other people’s mistakes, while an average man learns from his own. A fool learns from neither.\(^8\) Learning from past mistakes re-

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\(^7\) This idiom first appeared in print in John Selden, *Table-Talk, Being Discourses of John Selden, Esq, or His Sense of Various Matters of Weight and High Consequence, Relating Especially to Religion and State* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1654).

quires humility though, and as stated earlier, that can be difficult, especially for those who have achieved much in their career or life. No matter how old or experienced, however, someone has been there before us and we can learn from them, even if it is only as an example of what not to do.

Denzell Washington, in my humble opinion, is both a fantastic actor and, from all I have read about him, a wonderful human being. He is in high demand as a motivational speaker, and one of the things he talks about frequently is the role of mentors in his life. He discussed this at length in an article on the website Guideposts:

One of my favorite verses of the Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Powerful words, aren’t they? They remind me of how important it is to give children a firm foundation. Show me a successful individual and I’ll show you someone who had real positive influences in his or her life. I don’t care what you do for a living—if you do it well, I’m sure there was someone cheering you on or showing the way. A mentor. I’ve had that push in my life, going back as far as I can remember. Here’s how mentors can make a difference. Here’s what they did for me. . . .

My second go-round at Fordham [University] I switched to the school’s midtown [New York City] campus where they had a real drama program, and I became passionate about acting. Bob [Robert W.] Stone, my English teacher, was involved in the theater program and knew his stuff. He’d been on Broadway with stars like Paul Robeson and José Ferrer and had accomplished a lot. I told him I was serious about

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becoming an actor and he encouraged me. More than that, he believed in me.

After I appeared in a student production of Othello he wrote a letter of recommendation for me to grad school. What he basically said was, “If you don’t have the talent to nurture this young man, then don’t accept him.” I must’ve read that letter a hundred times. Each time I thought, Wow! If he thinks I’m that good, then I’m going to have to live up to those words. He put a fire under me.

For years I kept that letter in my pocket—still have it. Whenever things became tough, I read it. There were times I wondered if I’d ever catch my first break, but Bob’s words kept me going. I kept telling myself, It’ll all work out; something big is coming. Yes, I worked hard, I made some sacrifices until I finally made it. Yes, you could say I had some luck.

But I also had tremendous help along the way. That was a huge blessing from God. Behind every great success there’s someone and often more than one person. A parent, teacher, coach, role model. It starts somewhere. As the Bible says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” There’s no reason it can’t start with you.10

The focus of this chapter is that we are indeed our fellow human’s keeper. We are responsible for those around us whether we take on that responsibility or not. At some point, we will no longer be around and will leave the business end of this life to those coming along behind us. If we do not like what they are doing now, we can influence it while we are still here. Once we have retired or departed, our influ-

ence drops considerably. I frequently told my Marines that we get the kind of Marine Corps that we expect, enforce, supervise, and mentor. If we do not like how things are going, we have only to look in the mirror to find the source of the problem. Clearly, this applies to any walk of life as well.
Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) understood this responsibility clearly when he wrote the poem “If—.” Kipling was famous for his stories of India as well as many other adventures, but “If—” highlights this chapter on mentoring because he wrote it to impart wisdom and help the young men of his time to live up to the ideals of manhood as he saw them:

If you can keep your head when all about you
    Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
    But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
    Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
    And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
    If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
    And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
    Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
    And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
    And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
    And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
    To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
    Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on”;
Figure 30. Rudyard Kipling, ca. 1900
Source: silver print, courtesy of Elliot and Fry.
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
   Or walk with kings—nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
   If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run—
   Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!\(^{11}\)

Questions to Consider
1. Do you take the time to understand those around you and help them to succeed if they need it?
2. Do your actions match the words you speak?
3. Are you open to being mentored yourself?

Suggested Further Study
One of our Founding Fathers and an incredible person in his own right. Extremely intelligent and accomplished, this autobiography is amazingly humble and well written. Franklin talks about the system he used for personal self-improvement and I found that especially valuable.

Kipling was an amazing storyteller and poet, though a good bit of his work would not be considered politically correct by today's standards, the basic tenets he presents offer lessons to be learned.

Washington, Denzell. “Guideposts Classics: Denzel Washington, Inspired to Be Great.” Guideposts, January 2007. Washington is one of my favorite actors and this particular post shows him to be a good person as well.