

Prayer Mentors Who Shaped Me

By Jonathan Graf

Having a life coach is popular these days. Many people—especially leaders—hire someone who can look critically at a person's effectiveness in his or her life, work, relationships, etc., and offer tips and suggestions on how to improve in areas of weakness.

I don't knock that practice, but I have never had such a person in my life. Maybe I would be a corporate CEO today if I had!

I have had mentors, though—people I have learned from in specific areas of my life. Some were personal like Dr. Neil Foster (my first boss in publishing), Sandra Higley (my assistant at *Pray!* Magazine), Dr. Alvin VanderGriend (a prayer mentor), Lee Brase (prayer leader at The Navigators), and Dave Butts (great friend and former boss when I worked for Harvest Prayer Ministries). Others mentored me through the books they wrote.

One such author/mentor is Dr. A.B. Simpson, a famous missionary statesman of the late 1800s and early 1900s, and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). I started reading Simpson in earnest when I became his editor! My first publishing job was as classics editor at the C&MA's publishing house. I worked to repackage many of Simpson's 100-plus books to reissue them for modern readers.

Simpson wrote a lot on the Holy Spirit, divine healing, and prayer. He shaped my thinking about prayer as I read *The Life of Prayer* and the prayer sections in his *Christ in the Bible* commentary series.

"Prayer is the secret force of everything in the spiritual

kingdom,” Simpson wrote in his commentary. “This great ministry of prayer begins in the bosom of Jesus, but is by Him transferred through the Holy Spirit to the heart of His Church and carried on by us in the ministry of prayer on earth.”

Prayer became more important to me as I read, “Our work must be born in prayer, watered by prayer, guarded by and protected by prayer and the worker himself ever steeped in prayer, and hidden behind the supernatural working of an almighty hand.”

It was reading Simpson that got me, as a believer in my mid-30s, starting to grow in my prayer life. I began to realize that many believers and churches were not experiencing dynamic, transforming prayer. His works—and another C&MA mentor A.W. Tozer and his book *The Pursuit of God*—were the start of my journey toward becoming a prayer leader and a voice for prayer in the local church.

Our spiritual growth will be more significant if we have mentors in our lives. We all need the voices of others to remind us, push us, and encourage us in our walks. Who are your prayer mentors?

Maybe *you* are a prayer mentor! If so, speak into others. Encourage them in prayer.

– Jonathan Graf is the publisher of *Prayer Connect* magazine.

Note: If you want to mentor others in prayer, a great resource is *Prayer That’s Caught and Taught: Mentoring the Next Generation* by *Prayer Connect* editor Carol Madison. It offers nine important prayer principles people need to understand, as well as suggestions on how to teach them to those you mentor.