

David Cranston

**On Eagle's Wings: Models in Mentoring**

Oxford, UK, Regnum Books International, 2014, pp. 91.

Mentoring can hardly be described as a new development towards achieving human potential. It is probably a concept as old as time itself, yet it has become clear that in today's fast paced society and with the ever growing expectations and pressures we face, it is a necessity for those who wish to optimize the use of their knowledge. In every field of work, today we face situations with requirements that far exceed the reach of raw education, situations that require experience and guidance. In such an environment, mentoring becomes an invaluable asset. The publisher of this book, the Oxford Center for Mission Studies and its author David Cranston, himself a busy Oxford surgeon, recognize the importance of the concept of mentoring for all those seeking heights in all fields of life, both Christian and non-Christian. The author has published over 118 original publications so far, with this being his first book. He graduated from Oxford University and works as a Consultant Urological Surgeon at the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital. Regnum Books International is a publishing branch of the Oxford Center for Mission Studies with over 100 published books focused on Christian missions and spirituality.

The purpose of this book is to bring the process of mentoring, with all its fine details, closer to the reader. It aims to highlight the importance and the need of a mentor—mentee relationship. Such a relationship is especially important for Christians, and the author knows this and confirms it with his own testimony. The reader will be challenged to think of his/her own life and the mentoring he/she has received or been a part of. The author approaches this subject with great care, having seen firsthand the benefits of mentoring. In this short but comprehensive book, we are taken on a trip starting with the etymological background of the word "mentor" as described in the first chapter, moving on to actual reactions and results of mentoring in everyday situations, and finishing with practical advice and a summary. Dr. Cranston has made an effort to highlight everything positive there is to know about mentoring and has done so with vivid insight, often using anecdotes and real life stories as well as quoting many famous Christian thinkers and undoubtedly mentors such as John Stott, C.S. Lewis, John Lennox and many others.

For Cranston, mentoring and the fruits of the process are indispensable to those who wish to be their best. We are reminded that we are all influenced by others in one way or another. If we wish to channel the experience and advice of others into our own development, we are to consider getting in touch with people who have been in situations that are similar to ours and can offer unique insight on account of the fact that "they have been there." The title of his book, *On Eagle's Wings*, reflects the heights that can only be achieved with the help of

others. Throughout the book, it becomes crystal clear that Cranston highly values the mentoring of others that took place in his own life and career, and out of respect and gratitude comes the incentive for writing this book.

The first chapter, as any good first chapter would, defines mentorship and traces its origins in history. We read the definition of mentorship as it is perceived today, as a relationship with certain boundaries. Cranston highlights the additional content of Christian mentorship in light of the work of the Holy Spirit along with the wisdom of the Bible that is to lead an individual to become more like Christ. In this first chapter, and also throughout the entire book, we are reminded that the mentor—mentee relationship is something that works both ways. The mentor will often learn much from the mentee, and that is a quality that will make him/her a better mentor in return.

The next two chapters are a short trip into the past, giving insights on mentoring both from the Bible and from history. The first of these two chapters focuses on ten biblical examples of mentoring, each with its own characters and each with its own unique lesson regarding mentoring. The list starts with Moses' father-in-law Jethro and his advice regarding the delegation process which was to free Moses of excessive burden. The author then continues to go through the stories of Joshua, Naomi, the priest Eli and the prophet Elijah, Mordecai, Elizabeth, Barnabas, the relationship of Paul with his student Timothy, and in the end, the list concludes with the perfect mentor, the teacher of the twelve disciples. The chapter gives an interesting insight into mentoring through well-known Bible stories. The third chapter covers three historical characters and their stories which are not as commonly familiar. What we learn is that their mentorship raised and helped develop three very important historical persons. We are given precious understanding of the mentoring that took place in the lives of William Wilberforce, Mahatma Ghandi and King Hussein of Jordan, all three prominent historical figures.

In the four chapters that follow, Cranston makes an effort to describe some of the mentors in his own life, people that have invested in him, some even without knowledge of having done so. One of these people was the recently deceased John Stott with whom the author had a close friendship and whose mentoring efforts in the life of Dr. Cranston are highlighted in a special way. Probably the most practical chapter in the book is the one that describes the process of becoming a mentor. Here we have the author's insight and practical advice for what it means to become a mentor drawing from his vast personal experience in mentoring. The author then continues, in the next chapter, to reveal to the reader the dynamic and exciting aspects of working, mentoring and being mentored in a medical environment. He gives a description of what mentorship is like in the fast paced, stressful work place of an Oxford surgery which brings additional characters to

the story, each one with a unique lesson for the reader.

The ninth chapter of the book is dedicated to what is probably the most interesting aspect for Christians, and that is mentoring people in a church environment. In this chapter, the author sidetracks from his usual narrative style and offers a systematic examination of important aspects of Christian mentoring. We are again reminded that the first and most important thing is to be mindful of our own walk with God. Rest, task delegation, sleep, physical health and prayer are all important parts of maintaining an altogether healthy approach. The second key aspect is family life, and we are urged to take heed of this very important part of our lives. "We need to be careful that the urgent does not push out the important" are the words of the author pertaining to family. Cranston then proceeds to describe Christian leadership with two distinct images: one of a bridge builder and the other of a servant. He finishes the chapter with a few interesting stories of leaders confronting illness, death and suffering, lying down for the reader a Christian perspective on these hard but part-of-life topics. The final chapter is a short recap of his important mentoring experiences and pointers along with some practical practices in mentoring, both negative and positive.

David Cranston certainly proves to have something to say about mentoring. A lifelong experience in medicine and lay Christian ministry make up for a good background if one is to speak about the many benefits of mentoring. In this interesting and instructive book, the author has included personal revelations on the topic along with historical and biblical lessons, and quoted wisdom from great Christian and secular minds. The book is short and easy to read, and undoubtedly comes opportunely for those that understand the importance of the many lessons we have learned and have yet to learn from others, as well as offering our own knowledge and experience to those in need of it. The book is sure to inspire those in leadership positions to think hard about the legacy they will leave behind and their involvement in the development and empowerment of those that are to succeed them.

*Filip Grujić*

Asamoah-Gyadu J. KWABENA

**Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context**

Regnum Books, Oxford, 2013, 194 pages.

The book *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* attempts to offer a description of African Pentecostalism from within. It is well known that the Pentecostal movement emphasizes the work of the Holy