

Understanding the Differences between Protégés, Partners and Parasites

Read Time: 4 Minutes 7 Seconds

Being involved with pastoral and apostolic-type ministry for more than three decades, I have attempted to prioritize building relationally through covenant and mentoring. This experience has shown me that in order to be successful, I must discern between three types of people: protégés, partners and parasites.

The following are my observations regarding these three kinds of people:

Protégés

By protégé I mean a person who I am mentoring who is open to grow with a heart to serve together with me for the kingdom. Usually, it is a younger emerging leader who I see leadership potential in, which motivates me to invest my time into him or her.

The greatest call upon my life is to mentor and nurture the next generation of leaders so that God's kingdom influence can penetrate every facet of society! In order for me to accomplish this, there has to be a generational impact in which the next generation of leaders is equipped to stand upon the shoulders of those leaders who preceded them.

A protégé would develop a deep relationship of trust with me, have access to me and allow me to speak into his life. In many cases, we have to choose our successors in every aspect of our life's work; our successors will most likely arise out of the pool of protégés we are mentoring. That being said, I am

constantly looking for potential protégés to pour into—some will be short term and some will have a lifetime relationship with me. Discovering a divine connection with a new protégé is one of the great joys of my life!

Partners

In order to establish kingdom influence in a community, city or nation, we have to establish many partnerships. No leader, organization or church will be able to bring societal transformation by themselves!

Another great joy I experience is when God connects me with peers, like minded leaders, who have high levels of influence in their particular spheres.

For example, in the Word of God, we find that in order to rebuild Jerusalem during the post-exilic era, God partnered Nehemiah, who was a politician (who received a government grant and safe passage from the Persian king for his assignment to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem) with Ezra, a religious leader (who taught the Word of God to those repatriating back into Jerusalem from exile). In my more than three decades of ministry, I would not have been able to accomplish much in the way of church and marketplace ministry if I did not collaborate with key leaders in both spheres.

Partners must have a certain amount of influence depending upon the task at hand. They must have a willing heart to serve, be trustworthy, have no hidden agendas and be willing to do what it takes to get the job done. If they are all talk and no action, I cannot count upon them to be a partner.

Parasites

Last, but not least, there will always be parasites who want to use your name, influence, authority and gifting to benefit themselves while not having a mutual motivation to benefit you. The scientific definition of parasite can come in handy

in this article: a parasite is “an organism that grows, feeds and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host.” Thus, in this context, a parasite is someone who feeds off of other people to sustain themselves, while not reciprocating a mutual benefit.

Of course, some are not in a position to have a mutually beneficial relationship with anyone, such as young natural children and newly born spiritual children, as well as some people in trauma. But, in the context of this article, with parasite I am referring to a person who should be in a position to have mutually beneficial relationships but because they are self-focused, they only relate to those they can take advantage of since their only agenda is self-preservation and self-aggrandizement. They have no motivation to give blessings back even though they may talk a good talk!

These are the people who drop names to get ahead, who use your influence to get what they want, and who will feign friendship with you as long as you are doing something for them.

Consequently, if at all possible, avoid these kinds of people and do not waste your time investing into them (except to win them to Christ) because, unless they change, they will go from one relationship to another and never bear long-lasting fruit for the kingdom. Their very nature, motivation and behavior totally repels the attitude of the Lord Jesus who came not to serve but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

In closing, not every person in the body of Christ has the same motivations, maturity levels, goals and emotional health levels. This is why we need to properly discern amongst these three kinds of people. If we do not, we will try to make a parasite a protégé, and be liable to prematurely make a protégé a partner. The result will be that we will experience much failure and frustration in our lives.

This has been taken from a chapter in Dr. Mattera's latest book "An Anthology of Essays on Cutting Edge Leadership." To purchase a copy click here.

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Dr. Joseph Mattera is an internationally-known author, consultant and theologian whose mission is to influence leaders who influence culture. He is the founding pastor of Resurrection Church, and leads several organizations, including The U.S. Coalition of Apostolic Leaders and Christ Covenant Coalition. Dr. Mattera is the author of 13 bestselling books, including his latest "The Purpose, Power and Process of Prophetic Ministry," and is renowned for applying Scripture to contemporary culture.