

**The Mentored Life: From Individualism to Personhood** by James M. Houston,  
NavPress, Colorado Springs, Colorado. 2002. Hardcover, 203 pp.  
Reviewed by Johan D. Tangelder.

The role of the mentor, an experienced trusted adviser, holds an influential position in our modern culture. As people encounter new circumstances, the natural tendency is to seek a skilled mentor for guidance. Mentoring is even seen as an important new form of social assistance. But the role of the mentor is not a recent invention.

Mentors have influenced countless lives throughout history. Houston, who devoted his life to mentoring, first as at Oxford, England, for twenty-five years, teaching in a secular environment, and then for another thirty years at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C., among theological students, argues that no valid mentor can be merely a theorist: one must communicate the "how," rather than the "what" of living wisely.

In the first part of the book, Houston examines the traditions of mentoring which have been absorbed by our modern Western culture. But he does not provide an in-depth historical survey, he is deliberately selective. In a masterful way, he exposes cracks in the philosophies used throughout history of mentoring. Individualism, stoicism, and even psychotherapy all fall far short of God's ultimate plan. In the second part of the book, Houston defines mentoring as Christian discipleship.

Our identity is with Christ. The Christian is by faith in the personal character of the triune God, by His Word, and by prayers, for the ultimate purpose of worship. The mentored life is to look to Christ for guidance, answers, and fulfillment. To become "like Christ" transforms autonomy to become "open" to the Other. It is self-renunciation.

Allegiance to Christ means "self-abandonment." In other words, rather than trying to discover our self and to reach our potential, we must come alongside the mentor who will help us to become all we can be through Christ. Houston also points out that we should not forget we are social beings. He calls upon the church to become a relational community of friends and mentors.

Houston's *The Mentored Life* is not for leisure reading. It challenges the mind and offers a new way of living. Houston draws from the rich treasure chest of church history and Scripture to make his case for Christian mentoring. Christian leaders should read this book and digest its message. They will find it time well spent and spiritually rewarding.

Highly recommended!