

THE MENTORING TREE
A LEADERSHIP LEGACY
OF LEIGHTON FORD

BY

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Introduction by Dr. Roger Parrott

As chair of the Leighton Ford Ministries board, I'm often asked by church leaders, "What is Leighton doing these days?"

The answer they are expecting to hear is about some project of scope like the significant ministry initiatives which have been an important part of Leighton's life, including leading the Lausanne 1 and Lausanne II congresses, preaching for huge crusades or conferences, or creating the Sandy Ford Fund and Arrow Leadership Program.

But instead of focusing on those public portions of his ministry path, I take great joy in sharing with them an entirely different priority that has become the center of Leighton's life – mentoring. Following the ministry pattern of Jesus, Leighton is investing in the deep relationships that equip a new generation of evangelists and ministry leaders, rather than being driven by the measurable ministry projects that can consume us.



Given the significance of Leighton’s mentoring in my life and in so many others, I pray this book will help change senior leaders’ perceptions of mentoring and understanding of their own responsibility to mentor. That is why the Board of Leighton Ford Ministries strongly encouraged Leighton to have this book written about the importance of mentoring in the lives all of us who minister, and in the future of the Church.

Ministers for the Kingdom desire to be used of God to reach scores of people for Christ, build programs and facilities that are lasting, and infuse our sphere of influence with Biblical ideas – but there is nothing farther reaching and more lasting than investing in leaders who will create a network of influence. All too often, however, we don’t see mentoring as our “real work,” but something that is squeezed in between appointments and projects.

If we can grasp the challenge of Leighton’s parable of the Mentoring Tree, investing in younger servants of the Lord will become a high priority. As a Board, we felt this story



needed to be told, because if Mentoring Trees could be planted and nourished by the Church, we will regain the depth, effectiveness, and significance of ministry that is too often stilted when our ministry initiatives are planted in the shade of a Banyan Tree.

For Leighton and Jeanie Ford, it took the tragedy of their son Sandy's death at age twenty-one, to hear God's call to move away from large ministry platforms, and instead grasp the eternal significance of investing in mentoring relationships – some one-on-one, some in small groups. This dramatic shift took courage and boldness, because it ran so counter to the expectations of many. Leighton had to make some hard choices about his public ministry in order to mentor.

It is also important to know that Jeanie has been a linchpin in this shift, not only by teaming with Leighton in the change, but through her remarkable insightful wisdom in developing a model for mentoring, and her personal mentoring relationships as well.



On this 20th anniversary of Leighton Ford Ministries, and the 25th anniversary of the Sandy Ford Fund, we celebrate the life and ministry of Leighton and Jeanie. And through the years, while their focus in mentoring has taken many forms, in all of them, it is the "personal touches" that made all the difference.

I've worked closely with Leighton for twenty years, and I know he would be the first to give all recognition to Jeanie, associates, mentors, leaders, supporters, friends, teachers, and a host of others who God has brought into his life to partner with him to develop this mentoring focus. And it is exactly that humble spirit that is the critical starting point for genuine mentoring.

Along with the entire Board of Leighton Ford ministries, I pray you will be encouraged by this very personal story of Leighton's ministry of mentoring, and most importantly, that planting a Mentoring Tree will move to the top of your own priorities.

Roger Parrott, Chair of the Leighton Ford Ministries Board



Dr. Roger Parrott has been a college president for seventeen years and is currently President of Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi. He began working with Leighton in 1986 as the U.S. Director for the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, and continues in leadership with the Lausanne movement serving as Treasurer, Chair of the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization, and as a member of the planning team for Lausanne III.



Chapter One: A Tale of Two Trees

It did not make the headlines, but not long ago there was a very important convention that met at a beach hotel in California.

It was a convention of leading trees, most of them old, some hundreds of years old, who had met to discuss the future of trees. They were very concerned that the world was running out of trees, and wanted to see what they could do about it.

But they also gathered because leaders like to meet other leaders. So the conference gave them the chance to get together with some very fine old trees from all over the world, enjoy tree talk, and just have a good time relaxing by the beach.

One afternoon two of these veteran tree leaders took a walk together on the beach.



One was Banyan, a very large spreading tree from Florida.

The other was Aspen, a slender tree with white bark and yellow leaves, who came from the slopes of Colorado.

Because they came from different parts of the country they were very curious about one another. So they decided to take a walk.

The banyan tree was very old, and bent over with the weight of his huge spreading branches. He walked with the aid of a handsome carved wood cane carved with intricate designs like tree branches.

"Where did you get the cane?" asked Aspen. "It looks very fine."

Banyan shook it proudly. "Very fine indeed" he said. "It belonged to my grandfather. It's made from one of the finest old trees, which donated a branch to a woodcarver who gave it to my grandfather in India."



"Aren't there many banyans in India?" asked Aspen. "And India is a very religious country isn't it?"

"Very religious," nodded Banyan. "In fact over there some people worship banyans as gods. Not that we are, of course. I know better. I may live a few hundred more years but not forever."

A fleeting look of sadness came over his face.

They walked a few more paces, dragging their roots in the water as children would, as if they were young trees again.

"Do you think about getting old?" asked Aspen thoughtfully.

"Do you think of what you have done for the world? And what you will leave behind?"

"I do," said Banyan. "When I was a young tree I had so many dreams of what I wanted to do. Many have come true. Florida is a hot place and I have given cool shade in the heat of the day to many weary people. I have done what God made me to do and that makes me very happy."



But something worries me.”

He paused.

“And what is that?” asked Aspen.

“Who will replace me, and you?” said the banyan. “This conference has made me very worried. The trees of the world are dying out in many places.”

Aspen nodded and his leaves shook.

“I wonder the same. In the hills of Colorado we don’t hear a lot of news from other parts of the world. I hadn’t heard how many trees are dying. Why, the other day the speaker said that a portion of forest the size of a football field is lost every minute of every day! Did you know that?”

“I knew it was bad,” said Banyan darkly, “but not that bad. Deforestation, is that the word?”

“Yes,” said Aspen. “After that session I saw some of our



brothers and sisters from Africa and Latin America who looked devastated. They said all their tropical forests would be gone in the next five years unless something is done.”

“My friend from Sri Lanka said the same thing,” said Banyan. “More and more people are being born. So many trees are being cut down to make rooms for farms to feed more people. And then we need more and more houses, so more trees are cut down. Then more firewood is needed to cook. On and on and on it goes.”

“Yes,” added Aspen, “and when trees go there’s not as much water drawn from the ground and it gets very dry. There are deserts where there used to be forests.”

“It does worry me,” said Banyan, and with heads bowed they walked on, silent.

Then Aspen turned and looked Banyan up and down.

“You are a very big tree,” he said. “Are you also very old?”



“Over a hundred years,” Banyan answered proudly. “And over a hundred feet tall.”

“Really?” exclaimed Aspen. “Do many banyan trees grow that old and that tall?”

“Many grow to be hundreds of years old,” answered the banyan “and very tall. But mostly” (and here his trunk shook with laughter) “mostly we grow very large around. We look like jolly fat men. Did you know the biggest banyan tree in the world is in India? It’s the Great Banyan in the botanical gardens near Calcutta. They tell me Great Banyan measures over three hundred meters around.”

“That’s one big tree” gasped the astonished aspen. “Nearly a thousand feet.”

“Yes,” said Banyan. “And when I was in school my history teacher said that when Alexander the Great came to India he camped under a banyan tree big enough to shelter all seven thousand of his soldiers.”



"How old is the Great Banyan?" asked Aspen.

"Perhaps two hundreds years" Banyan answered. "Some banyans may live over a thousand years."

"Amazing." Aspen exclaimed. "And do they spread?"

"We do," said Banyan. "We grow up and spread out. And we also look very strange because our roots start above the ground. They grow down from our branches into the ground and hold up other spreading branches. I guess they are tree canes" he chuckled, waving his own carved cane.

"Have you ever seen a big banyan?" he asked his companion.

Aspen shook his head.

"Well a single banyan tree can look like a forest. That Great Banyan near Calcutta may have what looks like a thousand trunks growing down."



They walked on, Banyan with his cane, Aspen thinking of what he had just learned.

“But I am being very impolite,” Banyan said at last, “talking so much about myself. What about aspens?” Banyan asked. “Are there many aspens in your part of the world?”

Aspen smiled. “A few. In fact we aspens are the mostly widely growing tree in North America, all across the continent. There are many of us where I come from, in the mountains of Colorado.”

“It must be a very beautiful place,” said Banyan, “because you are a very beautiful tree. So slender. Such lovely light trunk and yellow leaves. I wish I was as slender as you.”

He laughed again, ruefully, shaking his many long branches. “I guess I would look better if I trimmed down a bit.”

“And do aspens live a long time?” he wondered.



"Not as long as you," said Aspen. "Maybe a hundred and twenty years. But we do have a claim to fame."

"And what is that?" asked Banyan, curiously.

"Do you know where the largest living organism in the world is?" asked Aspen.

"Texas?" Banyan asked. "Isn't that where everything is the biggest?"

"No, not Texas, Oregon. And do you know what that organism is?"

"An aspen? How could that be?"

"No, a fungus. A huge fungus. But the second largest living thing *is* an aspen ...a 'quaking aspen' grove in the Wasatch Mountains in Utah. It's said to weigh over six thousand tons."

"My word" breathed Banyan. "How did it get that big?"



“Well, you have to understand aspens,” his friend explained.

“Have you ever seen an aspen grove? At first it looks like any other grove, a bunch of the same kind of tree. But it’s not. An aspen grove is actually one tree connected by its roots and the roots are out of sight under the soil. An aspen tree spreads out its roots and grows many trunks. Those who count these things say that one grove, one they call ‘Pando’, probably has forty one thousand stems off one root stock. It’s really one tree with many branches.”

“Well!” Banyan was speechless for a while. They walked on a few steps.

“But how long did it take to grow that way?”

“Perhaps ten thousand years,” said Aspen.

“Ten thousand years... but I thought you said aspens live only a hundred years or so?”

“True. For the original tree,” said Aspen. “But long after that



first visible trunk is gone, the roots under the soil are there, waiting, patient, until some disturbance comes and the sun stimulates another growth cycle and the tree pioneers on into new territory.”

“Truly amazing.” Banyan shook his head again. “I am glad to learn all this.”

“There’s something else I’m happy for,” said Aspen. “We trees don’t live just for ourselves, do we? We provide shade for young spruce and pine trees, and shelter them. We shed our leaves and let the sunlight filter through so they can grow too.”

Then he asked Banyan, “But tell me more about why you are so concerned about the future of your tree family. With so many big trees, that live so many hundreds of years, banyan trees shouldn’t have any trouble being around for many centuries to come. Why are you worried?”

Banyan did not reply for a moment. He walked a few paces, and kicked one of his roots in the sand. Then he looked up.



“We do have a problem,” he admitted. “In India there is a proverb: nothing grows under the banyan tree.”

“It’s sad, but true. A banyan tree, especially a very big one, is so huge, and its foliage is so thick, it does not let the light through. It does not allow the little seedlings to grow.

“That’s what makes me worry. I am still living. So are many other banyans. But what about the next generation? And the next? Who will provide shade for them?”

Then he turned and looked right into Aspen’s eyes.

“Do you know what else concerns me?”

“What?”

“It’s about the human leaders in our country. Too many of our big important leaders are like a big banyan tree. They take up so much space, demand so much attention. Even when they walk into a room they take up lots of space and



suck up the air. And I don't see them letting light through to nurture the younger ones coming along.

"Our world has many other problems besides our tree problems. We need leaders who can see beyond themselves and their own interests. And where are those leaders coming from?"

He fell silent. Even his great branches seemed to bow low before these grave questions.

Aspen too was quiet. Then he slowly voiced his own reflections.

"You are a very wise old tree, Banyan. What you say about our country is true. We do have lots of leaders that take up all the attention. We do need to allow new leaders to grow and take us into the years ahead.

"We have something to learn from your wisdom. This walk on the beach has been more important to me than all the statistics we missed hearing at the afternoon session."



“Agreed” said Banyan. “And I think I have something to learn from you. That leaders may be visible and grow tall and spread widely, but unless they are growing a whole network under the surface, how will their influence last?”

It was getting late.

Banyan and Aspen watched the red ball of the sun moving down toward the far edge of the sea. At the horizon it seemed to duck its head and pull the sea over its head, like a child snuggling under the covers for the night. For a few moments it let out winks of light that striped the edges of the evening clouds. And without a further nod it faded into the folds of the night.

The two old trees turned and headed back to the hotel, thinking about days past, and about children all around the world going to sleep, and dreaming of years yet to come.

-Leighton Ford



Chapter Two: Around The World In A Single Day

Imagine a digital video camera mounted in a space shuttle, orbiting the earth, providing a panoramic view – not of continents and oceans, but of some key players in Kingdom ministry, bound together in a relational network. Better yet, imagine being comfortably settled in the space shuttle, bowl of popcorn and soft drink in hand, taking a day to observe these men and women as they move through their day. We'll start Down Under (from the North American perspective!), and go from there...

To Australia...

Stephen Abbott may be in Melbourne or Ridley or Sydney, depending on the day. The Anglican professor and leader has ministered in both Australia and in the United States. His passion is helping the Australian church move away from a programmatic approach to evangelism and instead empower its people to use their relational networks to ensure that the message of Jesus Christ spreads in their communities.



Abbott is particularly concerned that the Australian church validate the ministry of its people in the marketplace so that the Gospel will penetrate the culture like leaven. His ministry of teaching, consulting, and writing is shaping the next generation of Australian church leaders to think beyond traditional models of church and evangelism. He lists as one of his hobbies and interests...“change”...and he knows that the church must change if its redemptive potential is to be realized.

*From Australia north across the Indian Ocean
to Singapore...*

Peter Chao may be there today, leading the team of Eagle Communications. Eagles is the outgrowth of a spiritual revival among high school students there many years ago. Peter and his compatriots have stayed together since forming a unique community committed to evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development among high tech professionals and others in this key Asian city. If Peter is not in Singapore today he is likely leading a creative evangelism outreach in Bangkok or Kuala Lumpur or some other major city.



Again we cross the Indian Ocean to pass over Sri Lanka...

There, in a land wracked by many years of civil war between the government and militant rebels, a nation still recovering from the brutal assault of the "tsunami", Ajith Fernando has for many years led Youth For Christ. In addition to mentoring his team of youth leaders, he writes books that are widely read, and often speaks and lectures around the world with a focus on leadership development and identifying, with passion and clarity, the nature of a biblically authentic ministry.

And west to Egypt ...

The space shuttle crosses over the desert and finds Ramez Atallah, the president of the Bible Society of Egypt, ensuring that the word of God is translated into the languages of his people. He is a passionate spokesman for followers of Christ who live in places where Christianity is a minority faith. There is nothing easy about being a Christian leader, particularly an outspoken Christian leader, in a strife-torn part of the world like the Middle East. There is a cost attached to being identified publicly as a Christ-follower,



especially one whose work involves making the Bible available to as many people as possible. No worries, though, for Atallah. "Stress elicits true commitment to Christ," he says. "It makes you focus on what's important."

Now you head south "up" (which looks like "down") the Nile River to the Sudan...

If it's the right time of the year you might find Roland Werner there. A gifted linguist, scholar, and evangelist, Roland spends weeks every year translating the Bible into the language of the Nubians, an ancient Muslim river tribe.

And then north to Jerusalem and across Turkey and on to Germany ...

As with Stephen Abbott you are never quite sure where to find Roland. If you don't spot him in the Sudan you might catch him in Jerusalem where his ministry maintains a house to minister to German tourists. Or as you continue your trip north you might find him in Marburg, where he leads ChristMeeting, a fellowship of some hundreds of students and young professionals, and doubles as a center for



friends, doing evangelism and training young Christians across Germany.

To the U.K. ...

Tea is served on the space shuttle as it crosses over the North Sea to the United Kingdom. Here, J. John is an internationally known evangelist, at least that is what he would be called in the United States. But “evangelist” is not exactly a popular word in the rapidly secularizing United Kingdom, which has long departed from much of its historical Christian roots.

On this day he may be speaking to members of Parliament, to a huge crowd in a great cathedral, to prisoners or at a university mission. “J” as he is popularly known, directs the Philo Trust, whose many outreach endeavors are devoted to showing that Christianity is not only true but that it is relevant, compelling, and personally meaningful for all people. In a land where most shrug their shoulders at truth claims, there are few more important tasks than showing that Christianity has personal meaning and impact.



And across the English Channel to France...

If anything, the Francophone world is an even harder place to communicate the Gospel than Great Britain. The message is heard most clearly through the words and lives of French men and women whose hearts have been captured by Christ.

Raphael Anzenberger is an associate of the well-known speaker and writer Ravi Zacharias and is also the national director of French Evangelization. As he carries out his ministry, he is always seeking men and women with the gifts of evangelism and leadership so that he can pour himself into their lives and ministries. "If we are going to reach the Francophone world", he says, "it will be through deep and meaningful relationships."

To Canada ...

The space shuttle wings over the polar route to North America and to Vancouver on the Canadian Pacific coast. There Ken Shigematsu wakes up every morning as the pastor of the Tenth Avenue Alliance Church. The church is growing, thriving, reflecting its fascinatingly diverse and



cosmopolitan city. It was not always that way, though.

When Ken came to Tenth Avenue, the church was in a long decline, unsure of itself and increasingly isolated from its community. Through time and with much adversity, Ken has led the church to reclaim its roots of evangelistic passion, to reach out beyond its cultural comfort zone, and to embrace the calling of an urban congregation in a complex metropolitan area. Tenth Avenue has a hope and a future, as well as a glorious past.

To the United States ...

We go south to Seattle, where Steve Haas serves as a Vice-President for church relations for the human relief and development agency World Vision, extending the love and compassion of Christ to the least of these in the most desperate parts of the world. If Steve is not in the office he is probably meeting with leaders of a congregation helping them to partner in ministering to AIDS victims in Africa, or orphans in India.



A short distance to the south, in Tacoma, Elizabeth Archer Klein, a Presbyterian pastor/evangelist, mentors younger leaders in person, over the phone and e-mail and through a teaching ministry, all the while available to lead turn-around efforts in churches that need fresh life and renewed passion for their communities.

And a little further down the west coast Elizabeth's close friend Edie Dwan plants a unique fellowship in Palo Alto, home of Stanford University and a notorious graveyard for church plants. Edie knows that evangelism in Palo Alto must take place one life at a time, so she loves and shepherds her "barn friends", fellow horse aficionados, many of whom consider her their pastor.

From California we move across the mountains and the plains to the suburbs of Chicago, in the American Midwest. Here Lon Allison leads the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College as it extends the reach of two iconic evangelical institutions. Under Allison's direction, the center carries out its four-fold strategic focus – Team with the church; Train leaders, Think the mission, and Tell the story.



Next we move across to the east coast where Pete Scazzero's ministry context is loud and complex –the tough mission field of Queens, New York. For two decades Pete has ministered in the middle of a challenging part of the most challenging of cities. Nearly a hundred languages are spoken within a short distance of New Life Church. In recent years, his ministry has expanded beyond the local church to the nation, as his books have helped challenge and encourage pastors and church leaders in many different contexts.

From New York the space shuttle heads south across North Carolina (where in passing you take a brief look down at Charlotte, which plays a key role in our story) and lands safely in Florida. There you disembark, stretch, and on the plane ride back home, take notes in a journal about what you have seen on this once in a lifetime day.

Varied leaders are these men and women. They go to bed and rise all over the world, in far flung locations, carrying out different kinds of ministries in vastly different cultural contexts. Some pastor, some teach, some consult, some



travel, others are rooted in a specific locale. Some are evangelists, and others are scholars. They are leaders from different nationalities and ethnicities.

But they have a few things in common, some elemental things.

Talk to them or read their letters and e-mails and you see a common passion for evangelism. A common commitment to extending the Kingdom rather than building personal empires. A common desire to identify and mentor future leaders from younger generations. A common heart for compassion and reconciliation, for global Christianity rather than a pinched nationalistic version.

And a common mentor...Leighton Ford.

Each of the men and women in our brief world tour – and the men and women you will read about in these pages – have been influenced by Leighton Ford's many decades of ministry. Each call him a mentor. Some call him their father in the faith or the father they never had. Some call him



colleague, others older brother. All call him an artist of the soul and a friend on the journey.

This book is about the mentoring ministry of Leighton Ford. Mark well – this book is not about Leighton the man as much as it is the values the man exemplifies. Leadership for evangelism. Mentoring. An eye to the future with a heart fully in the present. This book celebrates the anniversaries of Leighton Ford Ministries and the Sandy Ford Fund to be sure, but it is not a book about the past, or about institutions.

The Mentoring Tree is about a particular kind of mentoring – the kind that is like an aspen tree, not a banyan. The kind whose global impact for the Kingdom grows and spreads and will outlive all of us.

In his home study in Charlotte one day in 2005, Leighton unfolded his drawing of his “mentoring tree” for us. Almost reluctantly, he traced his finger over a pencil sketch of a tree where he had lined out branches representing the men and women he had mentored through the years...and smaller



branches representing the men and women they in turn had mentored and encouraged.

Over the next year we talked to dozens of these men and women, conducting personal interviews on the American East and West Coasts and in Canada, phone interviews from multiple continents, and e-mail dialogues spanning the globe. We asked them to tell us their stories of encountering Leighton and how those encounters had shaped their lives and ministries.

We were struck by two things. First, how many people wanted to share their stories. Second, by the common themes in those stories. The same phrases and ideas kept surfacing time and again. The people were very different, as were their ministry contexts. But the Leighton Ford “brand” of mentoring emerged as both innovative and consistent. Leighton’s life of mentoring and leadership has been the harbinger of a new thing in the Christian world.

We will point out some of the most important aspects of



Leighton's model of mentoring, but mostly we will let the branches tell the story themselves.



Chapter Three: On Becoming A Branch

It's All About The Timing

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear” runs the ancient proverb from the East.

The best information, most penetrating insight, and the wisest advice won't accomplish anything unless the recipient is ready to hear and apply the words. Throughout his ministry, Leighton Ford has demonstrated a knack for showing up as a mentor at just the right time.

Sometimes, the mentor has appeared at a **formative moment** in the mentee's life. Person after person has shared with us how one of the programs Leighton founded such as the Arrow Leadership Program or an Evangelism Leadership Seminar came at a moment in their ministry where they needed direction, or lacked hope and confidence, or were ready to hang it up.

“I started Arrow only a few weeks after beginning a new



ministry position,” says Pam Hiscock Bramin. “I had just become the senior pastor of a small, dying church in a denomination that was new to me. I felt lost, going from the mega-church world into something much different, moving to a new state by myself (I was single at the time). Landing in Arrow that week was a gift from God.

“Talking with, listening to, and observing Leighton was also a gift from God. I had been groomed in ministry settings to look at ministry success in terms of the externals – numbers and money. But here was a man speaking to our class about the internal stuff, a man that seemed at peace in his soul. The fact that Leighton wanted to mentor us – and me – one person at a time, rather than build a huge ministry structure challenged me in a way I desperately needed at the time. And in the years since, God has used Leighton to keep my ministry call alive.”

At other times, the mentor has appeared at a **crisis point** in the mentee’s life. Jonathan Mikes served as Leighton’s personal assistant for a year and now works as a missionary in Mexico.



“My time serving as Leighton’s personal assistant coincided with a rather turbulent time in my personal life,” Mikes writes. “During some pretty dark days, Leighton was a shoulder to cry on. I appreciated his heartfelt love and concern. Throughout our year together, Leighton consistently asked how I ‘felt’ and encouraged me to consider how God might be speaking to me through my emotions.”

Steve Russo, a California-based evangelist, wrote to Leighton: “I will always remember the time we spent at Los Angeles International Airport late one night. You were on your way to Australia and two of the guys that worked for our ministry had been killed by a drunk driver just a few days prior. You sat and cried with me over this tragic loss in my life and ministry. God used that time in a powerful way in my life.”

Edie Dwan, who has an influential discipling ministry and is currently a church planter says “I was raised by a famous father, which is not always easy. Famous people can ‘turn-off’ others because they so often turn into themselves. But



Leighton sought me out. He wanted to know me. He had heard that I had a strained relationship with my dad and he took the time to write my father a letter detailing why he thought I was special. When my father died, Leighton took me out to lunch. And he just listened.”

Ken Shigematsu writes, “Leighton has also guided me through crisis. In the late 90s, I was single, very tired in ministry, losing my inner footing. I discussed this candidly with Leighton. I went to North Carolina, and under his direction, I engaged in a 3-day private retreat to hammer out a personal credo and code of ethics that continue to guide me to this day.”

Sometimes, Leighton has been present at a **decision point** in a mentee’s life. Reid Sattlefield heads up a disciple-building ministry for Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary:

“A little more than five years ago my wife and daughter and I were serving as missionaries to an unreached Muslim people group in northwestern Uganda. Our intentions to serve as long-term missionaries were cut short when I and



another missionary were attacked by gunmen. Shot and left for dead, the Lord spared our lives. However, my injuries were so severe that we were forced to return to the States.

“Within a year of returning, my family moved to Charlotte for me to attend seminary. This was where I met Leighton. In fall of 2004 I was invited to take the responsibility of leading the Pierce Center for Disciple-Building at GCTS-Charlotte. Such transition in my life brought up many questions: What is the Lord teaching me about himself? What is the Lord teaching my about myself? How can I be a good steward of what the Lord has done in my life? In this quest, Leighton has helped me to slow down and wait on the Lord for answers. Truly, it is difficult to quantify the grace that I have received as a result of Leighton’s friendship and ministry to me.”

Every leader faces **times of intense discouragement**. Leighton has often been present in these trying times for many of his mentees.

Today, Roger Parrott is the president of Belhaven College in



Mississippi and the board chairman for Leighton Ford Ministries. But he faced a crucible moment in another role ten years ago:

“I’ve been involved with Leighton since I came to Charlotte in 1996 to be the U.S. director for Lausanne. We took on a massive fund raising campaign. I remember one day when the pressure was especially overwhelming. Leighton must have sensed it so he called and asked if I wanted to play tennis later that day. We met out at the club at 4 PM and I wasn’t hitting them too well, being distracted by the fund-raising campaign.

“After a set or two, we were sitting on the side of a hill under a tree and Leighton did not ask me about the fund-raising or the to-do list or about all of the business we could have discussed. He just said ‘You know, God loves you for who you are, not for what you do.’ It took off all the weight. We ended up raising about 12.5 million in two and a half years and Lausanne II was a great success.”

When you talk to Roger about Leighton’s impact, he speaks



repeatedly of another characteristic. "It is his ability to have major impact in small touches. The encounter may only be for a few moments, a meeting over a cup of coffee or a brief phone call, but its impact is huge."

Susan Perlman, an executive with Jews for Jesus, knows about care from Leighton at a tough moment in life. A member of the Lausanne Committee in the mid-1980's she received a devastating diagnosis of breast cancer and a poor prognosis.

Perlman had special responsibility for the 1987 Younger Leaders' Conference in Singapore but in 1985 was not at all sure that she would even be alive for the event. During a phone call, Susan suggested to Leighton that it might be better for her to step aside from the Singapore planning committee. His reply was immediate and decisive: "Susan, you are staying on the committee, and I am trusting God that you will be there."

"That was more than twenty years ago," Perlman says today. "I hope that my ministry over these years has made a



small contribution to the field of Jewish evangelism in which I labor and to the greater work of world evangelization that opened to me through Leighton and Lausanne. He has been an encourager, a friend, a teacher, and one of the most caring and compassionate people I've ever had the honor to know."

Doors Swing Wide Open

Part a few branches on the Mentoring Tree and you will see just how interconnected they are. Branches on the tree know each other, touch each other, and over the years have become intertwined, growing together to lend beauty and strength to the tree.

Mentee after mentee told us how Leighton opened doors for them, introducing them to people, connecting them with resources, and opening doors of opportunity for expanded influence and learning.

Graham Johnston was in his last year of seminary when Leighton offered him the opportunity to serve together for a year, gaining insight into evangelism, leadership



development, and communication. In fact, Johnston stayed by Leighton's side for several years and they worked alongside each other all over the world.

In 1987, Leighton Ford Ministries was conducting a series of evangelistic campaigns in New Zealand. Leighton asked Graham to travel ahead of the rest of the team and be the point person for three months working with national leaders in New Zealand and their teams.

What Graham did not know then, but learned later, was that the Kiwi leaders balked at having to work with this inexperienced American. Leighton stood his ground; he had his man.

"In a sense," Johnston says today, "Leighton staked his reputation on my capacity to rise to the occasion. If I dropped the ball he would be the one to take heat from the national leaders. After a cautious start it all came together and we began to function as a team."



Twenty years later, Johnston has an on-going and influential ministry in Australia. "Leighton opened this door and many others, doors that would have slammed in my face. He could have found someone else more experienced and seasoned, but he held the door for me. Sadly, many find door-opening to be too risky or demeaning. I admire Leighton's courage as I have watched him open doors for many other young men and women. It's with a sense of gratitude that I want to carry out the role of being God's doorman, seeing the potential and holding doors open through which others may walk."

Part of opening doors is connecting mentees with others, or as one mentee called it "networking for the Kingdom." Leighton says constantly "You really must meet..." and many of the branches of the tree have found that phrase occupying a prominent place in their vocabularies as well.

Martin Sanders is a true original – the first person to go from Arrow program mentor to Arrow program participant. The seminary professor and author of a well-received book on mentoring himself asked to accompany Leighton on one of



his international trips. In response, Leighton invited Sanders to accompany him to a conference for young evangelists sponsored by J John, himself a branch on the tree and a member of Leighton's Point Group.

"That was the beginning of a new ministry for me," says Sanders. "I had just begun an organization called Global Leadership which was designed to intentionally mentor the next generation of leaders around the world in under-resourced countries. As I look back over my last ten years, the influence of Leighton on my life and ministry is immeasurable. Many facets of who I am have been shaped by my connection to Leighton, his ministry, and his friends. As I continue to mentor dozens and even hundreds of young leaders a year as a professor and as the president of Global Leadership, I often tell the story of Leighton and his influence on me and upon multitudes of young leaders around the world."

Ken Shigematsu also tells the story of open doors and expanded relational networks:



“One of the great gifts Leighton has given to me and all who have come under his wings is the gift of connection with others. For example, through Arrow Leadership I got to know Hugo Venegas, a Costa Rican evangelist, who was initiating a church planting movement in Hawaii. Hugo has been a confidant and a brother who has inspired me to stay focused on Jesus. He was the best man at my wedding (at which Leighton officiated).

“I am also part of the Sigdor Group, a peer mentoring group of nine pastors and leaders of Christian non-profits, that meets yearly, under the guidance of Leighton. This has been a rich, life-shaping and life-giving group.

“With Leighton’s encouragement, I am now serving as a trustee of Gordon-Conwell Seminary, and have served as a mentor and teacher for some of the emerging young leaders who have received the Sandy Ford Scholarship.”

A Safe Community

Plenty of people, in ministry and in the marketplace, are



skilled networkers. But networking can be a mercenary affair, with “relationships” of convenience, limited in duration by mutual advantage as friends are dropped when they are not longer useful in climbing the ladder.

The opened doors and relational networks of the Mentoring Tree are of another kind. Leighton has introduced his mentees into something much more substantive and nurturing than a vocational network. Over the decades, the network of mentorees has become a safe community of brothers and sisters devoted to Kingdom growth.

Alison Barfoot is a female church leader and an Episcopalian, a not uncommon combination in the broader church world, but not one traditionally found in an evangelical seminar devoted to evangelism.

“I was not raised evangelical” writes Barfoot, who serves as the Assistant for International Relations to the Anglican Bishop of Uganda. I first met Leighton at Arrow, but unlike many of my classmates did not know of him beforehand. I had to overcome my prejudice against evangelicals. I had



some serious concerns about how cluster groups were being formed within my Arrow group. He took the time to listen to my pain and concerns about this issue.” Today, Barfoot is part of the Sigdor Group.

Eric Taylor is an Episcopal priest and member of the Sigdor peer group called together by Leighton. “The community that LFM has developed is really amazing. I think I receive as much from my peers as I have from Leighton. I have access to insight, experiences, and wisdom I would not have otherwise. There is a large network of very competent and smart folks who have been great resources for me as well as our ministry team. The difference that these relationships and connections have made in my development as a leader is impossible to calculate, but it is huge.”

Steve Johnson has helped to plant more than five hundred churches across the United States and is a highly regarded coach of church planters. The Sandy Ford Fund enabled Steve to finish seminary and prepare for church planting. More important than the financial assistance, though, was the introduction to a different way of living and relating.



Johnson's father was an alcoholic who eventually drank himself to death. As with all adult children of alcoholics, this left Steve with gaping holes in his life. He got to know Leighton and was deeply encouraged at this model of a godly man. But the one-to-one relationship was not the end.

Johnson was one of the original members of the Point Group, a community of emerging leaders gathered by Leighton. For the last fifteen years, Steve and the other members of the Point Group have spent a week a year being "lovingly shepherded" by Leighton.

"Not only has this been a great blessing in my life," Steve says, "but it has also become a model for how I invest myself in others. What I find myself doing is spreading a bit of what I have learned from Leighton into others."

J. John is another member of the Point Group. "These annual gatherings have always been a time of reflection, a time to take in, talk, laugh, read, and eat. The influence of



the Point Group led me to establish my own group here in England.”

Elizabeth Archer Klein has participated in or been a leader in just about everything Leighton Ford Ministries has offered through the years...Arrow, Advanced Arrow, the Sandy Ford Fund...and has been a mentor and leader in the SFF Scholarship Program and seminars.

Elizabeth is also a charter member of the Sigdor group. “The Sigdorans are a group of exceptional leaders and pastors spread from the West Coast of the USA to Africa...each year we meet for an exceptional retreat and stay in contact through e-mail and occasional visits which have grown into a deep and meaningful association of friends.”

Klein in turn has mentored and worked with men and women in France, Mexico, Switzerland, Kenya, Tanzania, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Russia, Germany, Ireland, and England...and the list is not complete. The safe community grows and expands.



There is no one way that a new branch is grafted into the Mentoring Tree. Seemingly chance encounters, introductions from years of relationship, moments of crisis, doubt, discouragement, triumph – there is no formula for becoming a branch..

But with all the differences of gender and ethnicity and nationality experience and life context, the branches of the tree have experienced a remarkable set of shared experiences. Moments of God-timing, impossibly opened doors and introductions to an amazing array of partners, mentors and friends, and life membership in a safe, nurturing community which is about the Kingdom and not about personal empire. This is what it means to be a branch on the Mentoring Tree



Chapter Four: The Qualities Of The Mentoring

Authentic

1976 was the Bicentennial year for the United States and also the year that Leighton Ford took the reins of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

One of his first decisions in the new post was to ask the Egyptian Ramez Atallah to serve as his assistant. While Atallah was not prepared to leave his position at InterVarsity Canada entirely, he agreed to devote one-fifth of his time to the Lausanne movement. He remained involved with Lausanne for the next twenty years.

“What amazed me most,” Atallah remembers, “was how gracious he was in allowing me to express my opinions and ideas, which he took so very seriously. I felt that through him I was having an impact on the Lausanne Committee even though he was the one who was the leader.”

Atallah contrasts Leighton’s authentic, humble style of



leading with that of some others. “His humble spirit and nondirective leadership were in stark contrast to some other world leaders who were on the LCWE and were especially notable for an American leader. He was a committed Christian leader who loved all people and tried his best to lead the Committee in a fair and visionary fashion.”

The importance of authenticity in mentoring cannot be overstated. A perceptive mentee will become disillusioned if the mentor professes one thing and lives its opposite. Mentoring involves all of life, not just transferred principles and knowledge. The branches of the mentoring tree speak of Leighton as a world Christian leader who renounced the perks and prestige that often come with stature and instead embraced humility and the common touch. And they seek to duplicate this authenticity in their own ministries of mentoring.

You can't know if a mentor is authentic unless you can get close enough to observe his or her life. And this leads to the second quality of the mentoring experience.



Available

A preacher stands behind a pulpit. A professor stands behind a lectern. A consultant instructs from an airport gate through a laptop. A seminar leader catches a ride to the airport gate after the engagement, headed for the next town.

All serve valuable functions, but none can be called mentors. A mentor has to be present, available to the mentee, involved in the fabric of her life. The best mentors help their mentees reflect on lived experience, in the moment. And this requires that the mentor be available.

That is not easy, especially given the packed schedule of an in-demand leader. That is why many visible leaders fail to reproduce themselves; mentoring does not seem practical given their time constraints.

Given this, it is all the more remarkable that Leighton, surely one of the busiest Christian leaders of the last half-century, has been able to invest so much in the lives of younger leaders.



Ajith Fernando has senior leader status himself now, as national director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka and an internationally sought preacher. But it was not always so.

“I first entered the Lausanne Committee as a representative of the ‘younger generation’ of leaders. Some of my previous encounters with international Christian leadership had not been very positive, and so I went into my first gatherings with some apprehension. Meeting Leighton burned into my heart the challenge of being kingdom seekers rather than empire builders. He talked about this a lot and modeled it in the way he interacted with us.”

All well and good. But many can “model” good leadership from the head of a committee table or from behind a dais. Leighton’s mentoring of Fernando went deeper.

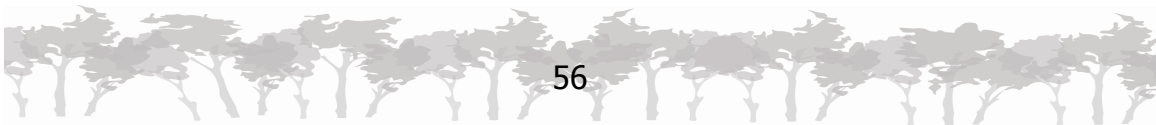
“My first real encounter with Leighton was at Amsterdam ‘83, the Billy Graham conference for itinerant evangelists. This was the first major international conference at which I spoke, and Leighton was the program chairman. At the end of the conference I was struggling with my responses to the



terribly sensual images I was being exposed to in the liberal European environment. I was going for a walk to be with the Lord and found that Leighton was going for a walk at the same time. He asked whether we could walk together. I was shocked that this famous man would want to walk with me.”

Actually, Ajith would not have been surprised had he known of Leighton’s legendary penchant for strategic walks. Mentee after mentee e-mailed or told us about a walk with Leighton which changed the direction of their lives and ministries.

“That was one of the most memorable walks that I, a regular walker, have had,” Fernando continues. “I talked about my struggles and got good hints from him which I have followed ever since. I also talked about preaching and about some of my weaknesses in evangelistic preaching. During our walk, Leighton gave me a good dose of teaching on the importance of trusting in the sovereignty of God in evangelistic preaching. This helped gradually to take away the terror I felt when giving an invitation for people to



respond to the Gospel message. I learned to trust the sovereign God to do his work. And I believe he has done his work in bringing people to Christ through my preaching over the years.”

This ministry-changing encounter is typical of others Leighton has had with branches of the mentoring tree in at least one respect – it was centered on the life or ministry of the mentee, not the status of the mentor. Leighton’s mentoring is characterized by this radical other-centeredness.

Focused On The Mentee

Colin McCartney is the executive director of UrbanPromise Toronto. His story grabs you by the heart and won’t let you go.

“I first met Leighton Ford after I had physically (but not quite emotionally or spiritually) recuperated from three tragedies that had occurred in my life. In a span of nine months, I had to deal with the murder of one of our staff in senseless gang related violence, the drowning death of a



child at one of our summer camps, and my own brush with death when I was temporarily paralyzed in a water accident.

“After my physical recovery, I was blessed with the opportunity to spend a few days at a lake condo that friends of Leighton make available to people like me who want to spend time alone with God. Before I went to the lake, I spent a few hours alone with Leighton. I told him my story and shared my soul with him regarding what I felt the Lord was doing through these tragic events.

“Leighton listened very intently and offered little gems of wisdom, leading me to Scriptures and readings to go over while staying at the lake house. These readings and Scriptures were a perfect tool in God’s hands. Aided by Leighton’s personal attention and counsel I met the Lord in a special way during those days at the lake. Leighton is a gifted listener and a true spiritual director.”

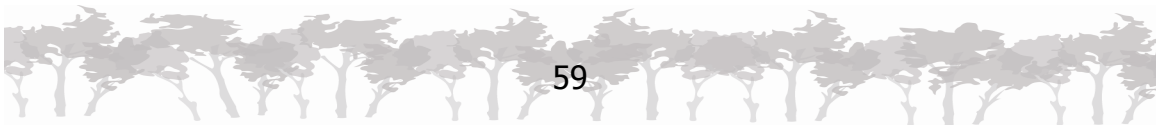
Susu Scott also speaks of the mentor’s warm, personal attention and focus:



“I'd have to say that whenever I'm with him I feel engaged. One of his great strengths is his ability to listen and take on board whatever is happening. He will ask questions and listen intently and feed back to you to make sure he understands. In other words, people like me are 'engaged' by Leighton. Leighton has a way of making someone feel that he has time for them. This is something I have tried to imitate in my ministry.”

“I first met Leighton during the Arrow Leadership Program. I didn't have much personal time with him but whenever I sat near him at a meal or spoke briefly to him at an informal part of the program I felt that he cared about who I was and what was going on in my life. At the time I was working as a chaplain at a girls' boarding school. I felt very isolated and so to have this well known, busy, speaker/teacher take an interest in me was a tonic.”

“Leighton not only listens to others but he invites people into his own life. It was wonderful to discover in the midst of a full schedule that he and I share a love of art, animals, nature and ice cream. Leighton makes a point of doing

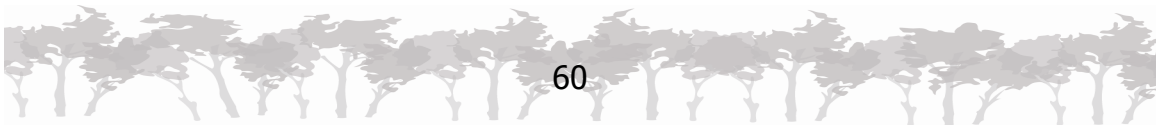


things with people - like taking a walk - building associations and making memories. Years later he'll say, 'Hey, remember that time you and I went to visit the llamas?' He must have thousands of those memories with hundreds of people but he has a way of letting you know that you matter."

Susu Scott graduated from the Arrow Leadership Program years ago, but still maintains contact. "When I'm in Charlotte, he works hard to fit me in to a busy schedule - if only for a few moments - not only because it is important to me but because it is important to him. He really does care about people - and it shows."

Ruth Pape was part of the first Canadian Arrow class. Six months after the opening session, Leighton sought her out with a very specific, probing question.

"He wanted to understand what it felt like to be a woman in ministry," Pape recalls. "As a man, he truly tried to understand and he wanted to raise the awareness of how difficult it is to be a woman in ministry. He personally demonstrated the value he places on the female gender and



it was because he believed in me that I was able to believe in myself. I have had many difficult times in ministry and I'm sure they are not over, but Leighton was truly used by God to give me the courage to 'stick it out'."

J. John, the British evangelist, seems to sum up what many of the mentoring tree branches have experienced of the mentor's attention and focus. "What impressed me most about Leighton was how personal he was and not only interested in my ministry, but interested in me, my wife, and my children."

Discernment

A fourth characteristic of the mentoring experience has been the wise discernment that comes from years of listening to God, accompanied with an emphasis on pulling away from the demands of life for short periods of time in order to listen to one's soul and to the Lord. Here, the line between mentoring and spiritual direction blurs a bit, and this is an innovative aspect of the new way of mentoring Leighton has introduced.



As a spiritual director, the mentor offers a discerning ear and discerning words of non-directive guidance. But more than that, the mentor passes on a way of life, a set of learned habits so that the mentee can pursue personal discernment and listen with more clarity to the voice of the Lord.

Leighton's former personal assistant Jonathan Mikes says, "Almost as part of my job description, Leighton suggested I take a day off every month to spend some time in personal retreat. He not only suggested it, he also modeled it himself. Through my own monthly retreats and through seeing Leighton take the time to rest, retreat, and reflect, I was greatly challenged to an alternative style of ministry—one not governed by busyness. This has been the most difficult lesson to continue to apply!"

Terry Erickson, the national director of evangelism for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA also speaks of the importance of personal retreats:

"I have had the privilege of doing two personal retreats with Leighton. Both were valuable experiences for me and for



my ministry. The first retreat was during my second year as national director. I was struggling to feel adequate for the task. During the retreat I was encouraged by my time alone with the Lord at the lake house. Then Leighton blessed me during my retreat review time so that I gained confidence in myself and in my ability to do the ministry God has given me.

“My second retreat was last year, my fourth year in the director’s role. This time, my ministry was going great, but I was moving too fast. This retreat helped me to slow down and to ask the question ‘Why am I always saying yes?’ Leighton has helped me to keep the question before me since the retreat and I am slowly learning to say no more often.”

This, then, is the legacy of the mentor, experienced by the mentees and now lived out in their own ministries as the tree grows in stature and strength – authenticity, availability, a focus on the mentee, and an emphasis on spiritual discernment. Where does the mentoring tree grow from here?



Chapter Five: The Future Of The Mentoring Tree

The English writer G.K Chesterton once noted that there are two kinds of people – those who observe the branches of a tree waving in the wind and credit the wind, and those who see the same sight and credit the tree. Those who credit the tree believe that the things we can see, touch, and examine are the ultimate reality and that the unseen must be understood in their light. Those who credit the wind, on the other hand, are those who believe in the primacy of the spirit and hold that unseen things are basic and that the seen world must be interpreted of that which is not quantifiable.

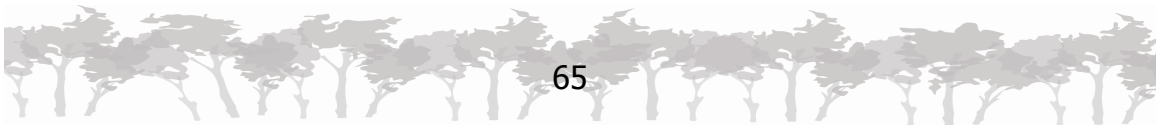
The legacy of a mentor is more like the wind than the tree. Evangelists can leave behind scores of decisions for Christ. Church planters can point to street addresses where new churches meet and worship. Pastors can point to buildings and capital campaigns and membership roles. Mentors don't have anything quite so tangible to mark their presence. But their impact is every bit as lasting.



When Leighton spread out his pencil drawing of the mentoring tree in his Charlotte study one afternoon, we both asked for a copy right away. Later we spent hours poring over the branches and marveling at the diversity of the growth. Spanning continents, nationalities, ethnicities, denominations, ranging over every imaginable variety of ministry. Church planting, pastoring, consulting, evangelism, colleges and seminaries, mission organizations, for-profit corporations.

Branches on the mentoring tree write influential books, instruct the next generation of Christian leaders, lead national movements, translate the Bible into strategic languages, pastor megachurches and small groups in horse barns. You name it, there is a branch of the mentoring tree doing it.

But we were looking for common themes in all of the diversity. As we celebrate the anniversaries of Leighton Ford Ministries and the Sandy Ford Fund and examine the mentoring legacy of Leighton Ford, our question was “What is lasting and common?” The answer was not surprising, but

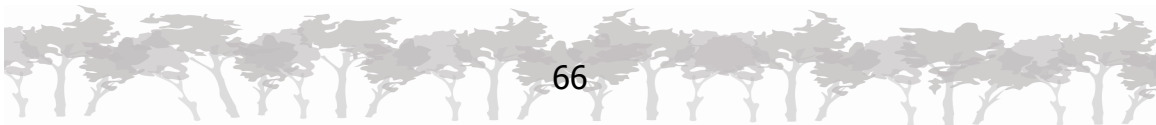


it bears careful reflection and meditation.

The lasting and common legacy of Leighton's mentoring has been mentors – men and women of all types and all callings who are committed to carrying on the legacy of mentoring Leighton has entrusted to them. Perhaps the most lasting legacy will be legions of mentors investing in the lives of others with the unique "brand" of mentoring which combines spiritual direction and the transference of skills with opened doors and the creation of a nurturing community.

More than anything else, this legacy ensures that the mentoring tree will live long after Leighton and even the earliest branches. New shoots will continue to grow off of the branches, and new shoots will grow off of new shoots, and the tree will only become stronger and more expansive with time.

The surest sign of this enduring legacy is not institutions or positions or publications or bank accounts, but is rather the words of the branches themselves, which reflect the orientation of their hearts.



To a person, Leighton's mentees echo Paul's words to Timothy: "You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others" (2 Timothy 2:2, New Living Translation). They are determined to pass on the legacy of the mentoring tree to trustworthy others who will, in turn, be committed to watering and fertilizing the tree so that the legacy continues.

J. John speaks for many when he talks about his commitment to see the Mentoring Tree continue to flourish:

"The influence of Leighton's Point Group inspired me to birth my own group here in England. I have gathered twelve preaching evangelists and have endeavored to instill in their lives what Leighton has instilled in mine, so the Mentoring Tree continues to grow."

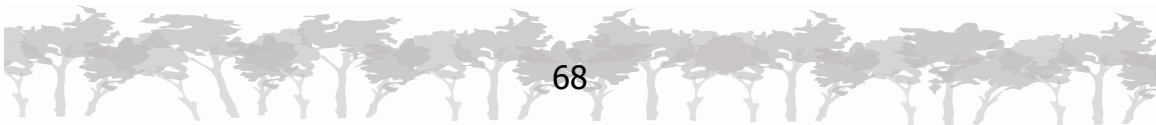
Kevin McKee, who pastors in a university setting, speaks like many of the tree's branches, of how personal transformation becomes ministry commitment:



“As an investor in others, I understand that I might never know the extent of the impact I would have on another young leader. I just pray that they see Christ and are encouraged to follow him. Leighton’s impact on me personally is still bearing fruit. I will be eternally grateful. More importantly, I believe that the ministries and visions that Leighton had and passed on to others will have impact for generations.”

Edie Dwan speaks not only of Leighton, but his beloved Jeanie as well, and how both servants have changed the way she relates to others.

“Leighton taught me about vision, leadership, mentoring, and seeking God’s heart; about picking yourself up and continuing the race no matter how hard you get knocked down; about dreaming God’s dreams. Jeanie taught me about the steadfastness of friendship; about unswerving loyalty; about the power of encouragement; about joy in the journey. She saw God’s work in me and helped me to see it too. What I have learned from the Fords of mentoring, of leadership and of spiritual friendship I am passing on to

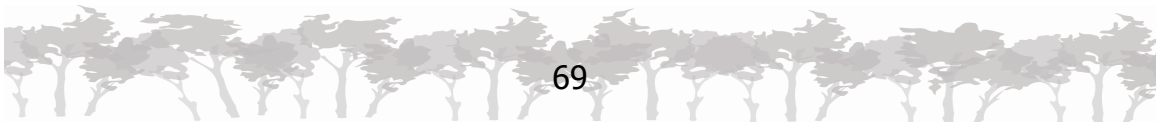


others. As they have changed my life, I hope to change others. May we all lead more like Jesus, to lead more to Jesus!”

In Germany, Roland Werner writes of the worldwide impact of the Mentoring Tree:

“When I think of Leighton and the ministry that God has given to him, I have the mental picture of a stream of living water. His life reminds me of the truth encapsulated in Psalm 84: 5-6; ‘Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.’ Certainly, Leighton has sought out the hidden streams and wells that can keep a new generation of leaders alive as we travel through the desert of the post-Christian western culture.”

Warren Reeve is a missionary to Indonesia who has helped to found the Missional International Church Network, which in only three years has become connected with fifteen percent of the world’s International Churches and hosted the



third International Church conference in Bangkok in April of 2006. He says, "The mentoring tree has provided protection and rest. The mentoring tree has been a catalyst for the birth of ministry. I am a proud product of LFM. We celebrate this twentieth milestone year of LFM with grateful hearts."

Pastor and evangelist Elizabeth Archer Klein has fun with the metaphor of the tree..."One never knows whom you will meet in this giant organism, which God, through Leighton, has grown...I can tell you that this extraordinary forest is filled with bright hues and wonderful shapes, an always growing, ever changing system that continues to plant seeds of growth in young leaders and to reach further with the life giving message of Jesus."

Carson Pue is the steward of one of the most important parts of the Mentoring Tree legacy, having succeeded Leighton serving in heading Arrow Leadership. Carson and his team of Arrow Leadership International Ministries are engaged in mentoring leaders around the world, currently in seven countries, and have over one thousand alumni.



At the celebration commemorating Arrow's 1,000th graduate, its leadership calculated that Arrow alumni in 2006 are inspiring and leading 1.6 million people around the world, a stunning fact which Carson calls "a testimony to the power of mentoring."

The numbers are important, because numbers represent people and nothing is more important than people. But the numbers do not tell the full story. The story is an ongoing narrative, told in big ways and small, public and private. And the story is sometimes written, sometimes preached, sometimes whispered, and sometimes told over coffee and laughter, wine and food, in luxurious restaurants in world capitals and corner cafes in the emerging world, and in the humble, bustling breakfast spots where pastors and evangelists do some of their best work.

The Mentoring Tree has an amazing root system, but its coverage is that of the aspen, not the banyan. Its roots grow deeper and spread, and it has no overwhelming, majestic branches which compel onlookers to cry out in wonder but, over time, fail to provide shelter. There is



always room for another branch, another shoot, always space for a root to sink deeper, always resources of healing sap for a fractured branch.

At a recent gathering in South Carolina, Leighton called together a diverse group of friends and partners to consider the next growth patterns of the Mentoring Tree. Over a leisurely two days of prayer, reflection, and thought, the group – along with Jeanie and Leighton – discerned that the next years would involve the creation of small mentoring communities. Leighton Ford Ministries will spend resources, energy, and time in helping to create small communities of leaders committed to the principles of the Mentoring Tree and to creating lasting networks of nurture. In this way, the legacy of the Mentoring Tree will outlast Leighton's own ministry, but will not be tied to an institutional structure.

The Mentoring Tree is rooted in the soil of a Gardener who invites to dinner folks who are hiding in the branches of a tree, who talks about the power of faith in terms of a tiny seed which grows to have surprising size, and who will not snap a bruised reed that others would trample upon. He is



the vine and we are all branches, rooted in him, finding our nourishment and sustenance in his life.

Leighton Ford has modeled his life and ministry on this Gardener and so the legacy of the Mentoring Tree is a lasting and eternal one. We believe there is more, much more, to be said about the revolutionary nature of Leighton's philosophy of mentoring and that the story deserves wider telling than can be accomplished by the scope of this booklet. But for our purposes, celebrating important anniversaries, it is enough to begin to tell the stories and to begin to describe the graceful shape of the tree.

We will give the last word to another of the branches, who speaks for them all:

"Thanks for giving me the opportunity to thank the man, the people with him, and the ministries for the life-changing investments that they have made in me. It has always been about Christ – and it is by his grace and for his glory that I say thanks."



An Appreciation – and Acknowledgment

Quite often, especially on a Sunday morning, I go to the woods nearby with my dog Wrangler and sit awhile on a low stone wall. And wait. The woods, as Wendell Berry writes, are made

... without your thought or work. Sit down; begin the wait
for small trees to grow big ...

A “mentoring tree” is God’s creation, not ours. Spiritual mentoring is not a technique to practice; it is a trust to rest in. Not a work for us to accomplish, but a waiting for God to complete his work. We may attend to the conditions which help a tree to grow. But as Jesus said, he is the vine, we the branches. Apart from him we can do nothing, let alone grow a tree!

That is my first and most vital appreciation. Yet I am also aware of how much I have learned from others about mentoring.



I first read of “banyan tree” leadership in an article by the veteran missionary and teacher Paul Hiebert. “Nothing grows under a banyan tree,” he wrote, quoting a South Indian proverb. “Many leaders are like banyan trees. They have great ministries, but when they pass from the scene there are no leaders to step into their shoes.” His was the seed thought for my parable which opens this book.

Many mentors have planted and nurtured seeds in my own life. My adopted mother Olive Ford taught me early about some outstanding Christian leaders, and held their example before me.

Evon Hedley appointed me as president of the local chapter of Canadian Youth Fellowship in my hometown. When he learned I was only 14 he must have nearly had a stroke (I was tall, and he thought I was 17!). But he stuck with me, encouraged and helped me along. At 90 Evon is still mentoring young men.

Billy Graham put an arm around my shoulder when as a high school youth leader I was discouraged at the lack of



response after he spoke at one of our rallies. "I believe God has given you a call, and if you stay humble he will use you" he said. He promised to pray for me, and later opened so many doors of ministry to me – and best of all told his sister in North Carolina about the young man he met in Canada. He was mentor as matchmaker!

The man I call my "third father", the late Bishop A. J. Dain was a military, missionary, and church leader. When I succeeded him as the chairman of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization he stayed on, as my helper and advisor.

The ministry described here is a tiny acknowledgment of what I owe to them.

Most of all I thank God for my beloved Jeanie. She has been a model mentor, to our children and grandchildren, and the many women who have been touched and shaped by her own quiet and loving investment in their lives. And she has been the most important partner in this ministry and life for over fifty years.



As Roger Parrott has written, the members of our board were insistent that this book be written. Thanks to them! And deep appreciation to my colleagues Jim Osterhaus and Todd Hahn for researching and writing it.

For the “branches” – the young (some no longer so young) leaders who have contributed, thanks. Without you this ministry would not have been possible.

We may plant the seed. God makes it grow. I pray that the seeds thoughts of *The Mentoring Tree* will result in many trees growing to God’s greater glory.

Leighton Ford
Charlotte North Carolina



About The Authors

Todd Hahn is the Executive Pastor for Ministry at Next Level Church in Charlotte. A recipient of the Sandy Ford Scholarship and a graduate of the Arrow Leadership Program, Todd served on the Sandy Ford Scholarship selection committee, the Sandy Ford Fund board, and is a former member of the Sigdor Group. He is the author or co-author of four books, including one with James Osterhaus and Joseph Jurkowski – *Thriving Through Ministry Conflict* (Zondervan, 2005).

James Osterhaus is a partner and consultant for TAG, a Fairfax, Virginia- based management consulting firm. He is a psychologist, executive coach, and public speaker and the author or co-author of eight books. He has served as a mentor for the Arrow Leadership Program and serves with Leighton Ford in Leading from Within retreats.

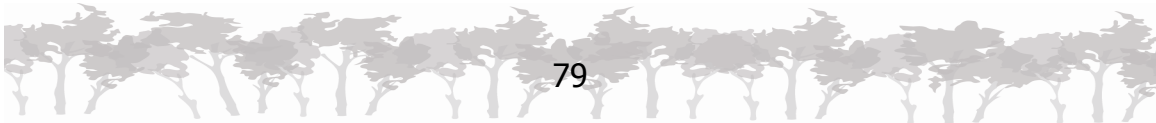


Authors' Note

The authors would like to thank the board of Leighton Ford Ministries, who envisioned and made possible this important project. We would like to thank Leighton Ford, who gave generously of his time and encouragement along the way, insisting that the booklet not be about him, but about the legacy of the Mentoring Tree. Leighton has been a friend, father, encourager, older brother, door-opener, and mentor to both of us and it is a great honor to have been asked to write this booklet.

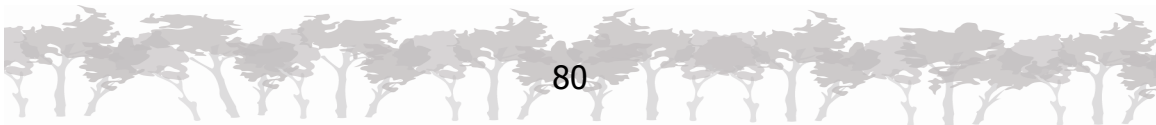
Chris Kim has been an invaluable help and encouragement in nailing administrative details, serving as a conduit for information, getting us through the printing process and doing all of it with unflinching good cheer!

Finally, we would like to thank the "branches" of the Mentoring Tree, who wrote us letters and e-mail and made time for phone and in-person interviews. The sheer scope of the Tree has encouraged us and given us great joy.



Credits

- The cover and back design is an original watercolor painting by Leighton Ford, of aspen trees in Colorado. The painting is entitled "Aspen Growth".
- The design for the cover and for the bottom of each page is by Ben Osterhaus.



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