

Making the Most of Mentoring:

How to Attract and Cultivate Mentors

by Doug Smith

Founder of L3 Leadership, LLC



L3Leadership.org

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A special thanks goes out to everyone who reviewed this his e-book and made it 100x better than the original copy:
Laura Smith, Natalie Rice, Paul Matthews, Doug Foster, Matt Mahan, and Melissa McAllister.

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Dedication

Mike and Larry, I'm writing this book for you. Thank you for mentoring me and helping to transform my life. Thank you for seeing potential in me and believing in me when nobody else did. It made a huge difference in my life. It is my hope that those who read this book will be inspired to invest in others as you have invested in me. In return, my prayer is that through my life and the lives of others that read this book, many will be transformed forever through the process of mentorship. Thank you for making this book possible.



(me with Larry)



(me with Mike)

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I. Why I Care About Mentoring

Mentoring has transformed my life. When I was a senior in high school my life looked very different than it does now. I had no plans and no purpose. My mom had just passed away, I was drinking and doing drugs, and my GPA was very low. In short, I was headed nowhere, fast.

Shortly after my mom passed, a friend invited me to a Bible study. I had no idea the impact that Bible study would have on my life. The woman who ran the Bible study was named Judy Steidel. Shortly after I starting attending, she invited me to her home for family dinners and started bringing me to their church.

At that time, I had two mentors come into my life: The first was Mike Steidel, Judy's husband, who is the Director of Admission at Carnegie Mellon University. I did not know it at the time, but Mike would eventually become my father-in-law! I had no idea that his mentorship would help me become a man worthy of marrying his daughter!

The other was Larry Bettencourt, who pastors a church in Chippewa, PA. Larry was the first person to see leadership potential in me and to cultivate that potential.

If it were not for the investment of these two men in my life, I would not be where I am or who I am today. It frightens me to think where I would be had they not chosen to invest in me.

II. Why You Should Care About Mentoring

Mentoring has the potential to transform your life. Noted leadership author Andy Stanley captures this point perfectly, saying that “mentors are here to help you go further, faster in your journey.” They are further down the road than you are and they know what roadblocks you might hit. They know the issues that will arise that you're going to need to overcome. They can help you get from point A to point B much faster than you could get there on your own. That is why you need mentors in your life.

If you are older, I would also encourage you to never stop pursuing mentorship. No matter where you are in life, someone is further ahead than you are. There are a lot of people you can still learn from. Find them and learn everything you can. Your life will be more fulfilling as a result. I also encourage you to invest in the next generation. Become a mentor. Share the lessons you have learned throughout your leadership journey.

“Mentors are here to help you go further, faster in your journey.” -
Andy Stanley

III. What You Can Get Out of This Book

If you will follow the process that I'm about to outline for you, you will have more mentors in your life, you'll be growing more than you ever imagined, and your life will be a hundred times more fulfilling than it is now. Let's jump in!

IV. What is Mentoring?

When you hear the word mentoring, what comes to mind? I imagine you're thinking of a one on one relationship with a Yoda-like mentor. A Yoda-like mentor is one mentor who can meet all of your developmental needs. I have some bad news for you, there are no Yoda's in real life! Why? Because nobody is an expert at everything.

You will find that you need mentors in every area of your life. For example, you will need leadership mentors, relationship mentors, financial mentors, spiritual mentors, and so on.

Many times we think that mentoring is a one-on-one relationship. We envision meeting every single month to have coffee with the same person, and believe if we don't spend two or three hours a month with them then they're not a mentor in your life. I want to shatter that definition of mentoring.

Mentoring is a relationship in which you are engaged and learning from someone who is further ahead in an area of life than you are.

If you are a mentor, mentoring is a personal investment in someone in whom you see potential of becoming more than they are in a given area of life.

Mentoring is a relationship in which you are engaged and learning from someone who is further ahead in an area of life than you are.

V. How I Learned to Pursue Mentorship

When I was 18 years old, I interned for Larry Bettencourt, who was the youth pastor at the church I attended. Larry is incredibly gifted at developing young leaders.

To help us develop, Larry would bring in high-level leaders to teach us about leadership. He always encouraged us to invite the leaders he brought in to have coffee and to ask them questions. I took him up on this suggestion and started inviting as many leaders as I could to coffee in order to learn from them.

After meeting with mentors for ten years and following the process I outline in this book, I found myself growing at a rapid pace. Through the mentors that came into my life, I learned how to work hard, how to connect and influence people, how to handle my finances, how to network, how to lead, how to be a godly man, and so many other things.

A lot of my peers were noticing the growth that had taken place in my life. Many of them started to ask me what I do to grow and how I got to spend time with so many great leaders. I started sharing with them what I had learned from my mentors and telling them that if they would follow the process I've developed, they could get meetings with great leaders as well.

V. How I Learned to Pursue Mentorship

I saw this as an opportunity to start adding value to my peers. I decided to start recording my time with mentors and leaders and make it available on a podcast.

Each month, I produce three episodes on the podcast. An interview with a great leader, a talk from a great leader from our breakfast series, and a personal leadership lesson by me. If you are interested in learning more about leadership, listen to my podcast here: <http://www.l3leadership.org/podcast/>

Along with the podcasts, I developed a lesson I called "Making the Most of Mentoring" in which I shared my entire process of getting meetings with leaders. I have taught it at a few places and received great feedback. I found that everyone wants to have great mentors in their lives, they just don't know how to get them. My hope is that this book will help you get great mentors and become great mentors.

VI. What Great Mentors Do

After years of meeting with mentors, I have found that great mentors do the following things to develop people:

Great Mentors See Things in You that You Can't See in Yourself - One of the most rewarding things in life is recognizing that there is more in you than you think there is. Mentors have a way of drawing those things out of us and helping us develop our potential.

Great Mentors Model Another Way of Living - In my life, I have found that more is “caught than taught”. In other words, you can learn just as much, if not more, by how your mentors live their lives than by what they teach you through their words. Great mentors will invite you into their lives and allow you to see them live out what they teach.

Great Mentors Will Teach You Their Expertise - You will find that you need mentors in every area of your life. You will need leadership mentors, relationship mentors, financial mentors, spiritual mentors, and so on.

Great Mentors Will Challenge You - They will challenge you by telling you no, calling you out, and pointing out your blind spots. You need mentors in your life that are willing to do these three things.

VI. What Great Mentors Do

Great Mentors Will Encourage You - Everybody needs encouragement. You will find that the encouragement mentors can provide you with can cause you to achieve things you never thought you could, and it will also get you through some of your most difficult seasons of life.

Great Mentors Open Doors to New Opportunities - They will give you things to do that will take you out of your comfort zone. There will be times when you do not think you are ready for the opportunities they will give you, but often these opportunities have the greatest potential to take us to the next level.

Great Mentors Will Connect You with People and Resources - They will open doors for you that you would never been able to open by yourself. They are generous with their network and the resources available to them.

VII. The Expectations of Mentoring

It's been said that disappointment is the gap between our expectations and reality. Too often, I see people who have unrealistic expectations of what their relationship with their mentor will look like. As a result, they get disappointed and bitter and stop pursuing mentorship all together. I believe this problem can be easily fixed if you have realistic expectations.

Here are a Few Things You Should Never Expect From Your Mentor:

- Don't expect them to meet with you more than once
- Don't expect to become best friends with them
- Don't expect them to hire you
- Don't expect them to do any favors for you

Be Grateful For Everything - Just because you shouldn't expect the things I just listed does not mean they will never happen. However, if you are not expecting them to do anything, then you can be grateful for everything that they do. If you'll adopt this attitude, you'll find mentoring one of the most rewarding experiences you'll ever have.

What should you expect from your mentors? I think you can expect them to do everything I listed in the "what great mentors do" section.

VIII. Three Truths About Mentors

Some Mentors You Will Never Meet - Some of the best mentors I have ever had, I have never met. They mentor me through their books, podcasts, and other resources. Through resources, we all have opportunities to be mentored by the masters. For a list of my favorite books, blogs, podcasts, and other resources, visit my resource page at: <http://dougsmithlive.com/resources>.

Some Mentors Will Be in Your Life for a Season - Some mentors will play an extremely significant role in your life for a period of time. That could be one meeting, one month, one year, or five years. I think it's important to realize that the mentors you have in your life now, may not be in your life forever. When you recognize this, it's easier to not be disappointed when you're not as close as you used to be, or if you fall out of contact completely.

A Few Mentors Will Be In Your Life Forever - If you're lucky, you will have one or two mentors who become life-long friends. If you are blessed enough to have relationships like this in your life, never take them for granted. They are extremely special.

IX. Where to Find Mentors

You can find mentors anywhere! I truly believe that you can learn from everyone. However, I do think it's important to find and choose the best mentors you can, and to do that you will need to be intentional about finding them. So, where do you find them?

Find Mentors through Referrals

This is my number one way of meeting new mentors. Every time I finish a meeting with someone, I always ask, "Are there one or two other leaders that you think would be willing to spend a half hour with me to do what we just did?" I would encourage you to do the same. You will be surprised who people know and who they will be willing to introduce you to!

In Resources - Books, Conferences, and Podcasts

One of the most influential mentors in my life is John Maxwell, a leadership author and speaker. What is crazy is that outside of meeting him at a book signing, I have never spent any time with him personally. He's mentored me through his resources. I have probably spent thousands of hours reading his books and listening to his leadership lessons.

You need to start learning from the masters. Start finding leaders in the areas where you want to grow and learn from them. Read their books, listen to their CDs, and take in everything you can. You can get mentored by the brightest people in every single field, with just the click of a mouse or buying a book. Get mentored by the masters.

For a list of some resources from my mentors, go to: dougsmithlive.com/resources

IX. Where to Find Mentors

“You are one relationship away from changing your destiny. -Craig Groeschel

Everywhere You Go

Craig Groeschel once said, “You are one relationship away from changing your destiny.” Everyone you meet is a potential mentor. You just have to be intentional about finding them.

Everywhere I go I'm looking for people that I can meet with that will take me further, faster. Mentors can be found in your family, in your church, at networking meetings, and in unexpected places!

X. What to Do Before You Meet With a Mentor

We talked about where to find mentors, now let's talk about what to do before you meet with a mentor.

Make Sure You Are on a Personal Growth Plan - Most people that you're going to ask to mentor you are going to be well read and have their own personal growth plans. A personal growth plan is simply a plan to intentionally develop yourself. They usually include reading books, listening to podcasts, meeting with mentors, and taking on challenges that enable them to grow their leadership.

Remember, the people you would like to meet with are where they are in life for a reason. If you aren't intentionally growing, you will not be able to relate or connect with them and they will think it's a waste of time. They are looking for someone who is hungry (ready to learn), and already doing everything they can to get where they want to go.

The more you grow, the more you'll be able to relate and connect with successful people. That's why it's so important to get mentored by the masters, to read the books, to listen to the CDs, and to listen to the lessons. When you do these things, you are building a solid foundation on which to converse well.

To learn more about developing a personal growth plan you can download and listen to this episode of the Learning to Lead podcast: <http://dougsmithlive.com/personal-growth-decision/>

XI. How to Land a Meeting with a Mentor

Develop a List of People You Would like to Meet with - I have a file of all the leaders I want to meet with and I am always adding to the list. I encourage you to make a bucket list of people you would like to connect with. Then use that list to follow the rest of this process.

Don't be afraid to ask. Most successful people that I've met with are dying to invest in young leaders who are willing to learn. They are successful and now they're looking to give back. Believe it or not, it's actually hard for them to find young leaders who want to be invested in.

Tim Ferris, author of the [4 Hour Work Week](#), talks about a challenge he issues to students at Stanford. Every semester, he has a challenge for the class: Reach out and connect with people that you think it would be impossible for you to contact. He mentions the CEO of Google, the President of the United States, etc.

What's interesting is when he makes that challenge, the students that actually go out and try to get their contact information and make the ask usually end up getting a phone call, an email, etc. However, half the class doesn't even try because they don't think it's possible.

No one should be off limits. Dream big on who you get to spend time with. I know it could be scary, but I say just go for it. Don't be afraid to ask. The worst they can do is ignore you or say no to your request. As my friend Paul Matthews says, "Some will, some won't, so what!"

XI. How to Land a Meeting with a Mentor

Develop a Strategy to Ask Them - One of the most beneficial things that has helped me was starting the Learning to Lead podcast. Before the podcast, I would email or call a potential mentor and say, "My name is Doug Smith, I know so and so," or, "I know you don't know me, but I'm really interested in personal growth and I really admire you, and I would love to spend some time with you, etc."

Now I say, "My name is Doug Smith. I have a leadership podcast in which I interview high-level leaders each month to learn from them. If you would be willing and able, I would love to interview you and record it. I will send you a list of questions in advance so you know what I am going to ask you. I only need 45 minutes to one hour of your time. If you are willing to record the interview, not only am I going to benefit from what you say, but I am also going to share it with everyone else who listens to my podcast and it will add value to them as well. Please let me know if you would be interested."

That's my plan to ask them. It communicates that I will not waste their time, I will maximize their influence through the podcast, and I am sincerely eager to learn from them.

Maybe you won't start a podcast, but I encourage you to come up with your own unique strategy for adding value to them. Perhaps you could do a write-up about what you learned from them, have them speak at an event for you or your organization, bring other leaders with you, etc.

Ask - Once you develop your plan, come up with a script and make the ask. Send the e-mail or make the phone call. Ask despite being afraid. You won't regret it.

XII. How to Prepare For Your Meeting

Now that you have your appointment set, how do you actually prepare for your meeting with a mentor? A few thoughts on this:

Study the person you'll be meeting with - Google them, look at their Facebook page, look at their LinkedIn page, look at their blog, listen to their podcast, watch their YouTube videos, and read everything you can about them. Learn as much as you possibly can. If I know a mutual acquaintance of the person I'm meeting with, I'll ask them, "If you had to ask them any question what would you ask them? What do I need to know about them? What do they like to do? What are they passionate about?" Bottom line: Learn as much as you can about them.

Have a list of questions you would ask - I have a list of 20 questions that I would like to ask any leader. Once I study the person I am meeting with, I will adapt the questions based on what I've read. Once you complete your list of questions, send it to the person so they can look over it in advance.

XII. How to Prepare For Your Meeting

Here are the list of questions that I start with:

1. Tell us about yourself, your family, your passions, and what you do.
2. Did you always know you were a leader? How did you learn leadership?
3. What advice do you wish someone would have told you when you were just starting out?
4. Can you name a person who has had a big impact on your life? How did they impact your life?
5. What are you doing and what have you done to ensure you continue to grow and develop as a leader?
6. What books have you read that have made a great impact on you that you would recommend?
7. How do you structure your days and your life so that you are as productive as possible?
8. How do you balance work and family?
9. What have you learned about money?
10. What have you learned about failure?
11. What qualities do you look for in up-and-coming leaders?
12. What can young leaders do to set themselves apart in their organizations?
13. Where do you see leaders missing it a lot?
14. What have you learned about building a great team?
15. What does leadership development look like in your organization?
16. If you could go back and have a conversation with your 20-year-old self, what would you tell that person?
17. What are you most proud of up to this point in your life?
18. What do you want your legacy to be?
19. Any closing advice for young leaders?
20. Who are some other great local leaders that would be worth our time to meet and get to know?

XII. How to Prepare For Your Meeting

Figure out what they love and get it for them - One of my favorite stories is about a woman who got an appointment scheduled with Warren Buffett. She was studying Warren and preparing questions when she found out that Warren Buffett loves Diet Cherry Coke. When she got to the meeting she sat down and said, "Mr. Buffett, I know that you love Diet Cherry Coke and I just thought we'd start off this interview with something you love, so I brought you a Diet Cherry Coke." When she handed him the drink, Warren Buffett looked back at her and said, "Young Lady, in all my years of being interviewed no one has ever brought me a Cherry Coke. Thank you so much. You can have as much time as you want." An hour and a half later, the interview was over. Most people don't get more than 10 or 15 minutes with Warren Buffett. She got an hour and a half because she found a way serve him.

How can you apply this? Find out what the person you're meeting with likes. Maybe they like Starbucks. Maybe they like a restaurant. Buy a gift card for them. As long as you remember it on the front end, bring it with you to the interview. If you don't, send it in your thank you card which we will talk about later on.

Confirm Your Meeting - Finally, the week of your meeting, email or call them to confirm the meeting. Make sure they have your cell phone number in case anything changes.

XIII. What to Do During Your Meeting

You have prepared for the meeting, now the day is here. Let's talk about what to do during your meeting. Always practice these principles:

Be Early - Pastor Larry always taught me that to be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late, and to be late is to be left. If you're going to be late because you had traffic or something came up, make sure you call them and tell them that. If they cancel, that is okay, just reschedule.

Shake Their Hand and Keep Eye Contact - Don't be intimidated by them! They are just a person. Show them that you are sharp and confident.

Confirm the Meeting Length and Agenda - Confirm with them how much time they have and then run them through how you would like to use the time you have.

Ask About Their Personal Life - I would spend 5-10 minutes just getting to know them if you can. Some people you meet with will want to get right into business. If that is the case, skip the personal talk. If they seem open to it, ask them about their family, ask them about where they vacation, ask them about things they do outside of their work. Most likely, they are always getting asked about work and success and all these things. Ask them things they probably don't get to talk enough about that they would love to talk about.

Bring a Notebook and Take Notes - Taking notes shows that you value what they're saying, it shows that you care enough to write it down, and that you may actually remember it.

XIV. Two Questions Your Mentors Will Ask Themselves About You

When a mentor is done meeting with you, they are going to ask themselves two questions about the meeting:

Did you value what they taught you? - Were you taking notes? Were you asking good questions? Were you focused in on the conversation?

Will you do something with it? - If it's your first meeting, this cannot be answered. However, if they meet with you again, rest assured they'll be asking if you did anything with what they taught you in the first meeting.

XV. What to Do After Your Meeting

Evaluate Your Meeting - Was the meeting as good as you thought it would be? Was it worse? Was it better? To be honest, sometimes you'll meet the people you look up and you'll be disappointed. Sometimes you'll say, "Wow, they're unbelievable, they are even better than I thought they were." Other times you're going to say, "Man, I thought they were so much more." There's nothing wrong with that. You are just trying to find out what works for you and who you want to be mentored by. Ultimately, in evaluating your meeting, all you want to decide is if you'd like to meet with them again.

Follow-Up and Thank Your Mentor - Always, always, always, write a thank you card. In the thank you card, do the following:

- **Thank Them for Their Time** - They did not have to give you an hour. Their time is precious. Be grateful.
- **Write Down Your Key Takeaways from Your Meeting** - Write, "Here are a few of my key takeaways from the time that we spent...1, 2, 3..." If you took notes, you should be able to pull your key points from there.
- **Give them a Gift** - If you forgot to bring the gift card to Starbucks or wherever, throw it in the thank you note and send. It'll have the exact same effect that it would have had giving it up front.

XV. What to Do After Your Meeting

Create and Execute Your Action Plan - The next thing you do after the meeting is to create an action plan. Look through your notes and make a to-do list of everything they told you to do. Maybe they told you to read a book, maybe they asked you to reach out to other people, maybe they asked you for a favor, maybe they asked you for_____. Then... actually do it. Do what they said, read that book, reach out to the person, and do what they asked you to do. Then and only then can you ask for another meeting.

XVI. How to Get and Start Your Second Meeting

Ask for Another Meeting - If you thought it was worth your time, and you see them becoming a mentor in your life, ask them to meet again in another month or two. Here is an example of what to say: "I so much enjoyed our time together. What do you think if we met in another month or two?" If you followed all of these steps, then more often than not they'll say yes. If they don't, that's okay too. Just be grateful you got some time with them.

Tell Them What You Learned and What You Did - If you do get a second meeting, thank them again for being willing to meet and then tell them the following things: The last time we met:

1. Here is what you taught me
2. Here is what I did with it. It will go a long way.

After you get your second meeting with your mentor, it is up to you both on how you want to continue the relationship. Maybe you meet once a month, once a quarter, or every few months. It doesn't matter. At that point, it starts to become a mentor-friendship more than strictly a mentorship.

XVII. Honor Your Mentors

I want to encourage you to develop a practice of honoring your mentors, specifically the ones that have been in your life for a long time. Find ways to honor them. At the end of every year I try to write three letters to the three most influential people in my life, just thanking them for the impact they've made on me.

If a mentor's been in my life for a long time, I might send them a gift and say, "I'll never forget the impact you've made on my life. Here's a gift. Thank you so much for being a blessing to me."

Even if it's 10 years after I've seen them, if they made a significant difference in my life I want them to know it. I will thank them publicly for making a difference in my life. For example, I occasionally will do a post on social media called, "Mentor Mondays" where I publicly thank my mentors for making a difference in my life. I may have them speak at an event and introduce them by telling the audience how they've impacted my life.

I always try to find any way I can to honor the mentors in my life.

XVIII. Pay Back Your Mentors

The greatest way you can pay back your mentors is by mentoring the next generation.

Finally, pay back your mentors. When I've met with a mentor multiple times, I always ask, "How can I pay you back after you've done so much for me?" Nearly every time I've asked that, their response is, "Doug, I'm doing this for you. The only thing I want in return is for you to recognize that one day a younger Doug is going to come along in your life, and they are going to send you an email and say, 'Will you meet with me? Will you mentor me?' The way you can pay me back is by doing for them what I've done for you."

The greatest way you can pay back your mentors is by mentoring the next generation.

If you have had the privilege of having mentors in your life, I can't encourage you enough to find one or two people that are younger than you, and do for them what your mentors did for you. I promise you that it will be one of the most rewarding parts of your life.

XIX. Making the Most of Mentoring Checklist

Where to Look for Mentors:

- Resources: Books, Conferences, Podcasts
- Local Newspapers: Business times, etc.
- Referrals: Ask the people you know

Before You Pursue Mentorship:

- Are you on a personal growth plan?

Landing a Meeting with a Mentor:

- Develop a list of people you would like to meet with.
- Develop a strategy to ask them.
- Don't be afraid to ask: make the call, send the e-mail, etc.

Preparing for Your First Meeting:

- Research the person you'll be meeting with.
- Learn as much as you can about them.
- Have a basic list of questions you'll ask every leader.
- Based on your research, add questions that are personally geared toward your mentor.
- Figure out a way to stand out to them.
- Find out what they love and get it for them.
- Confirm your meeting.

After Your Meeting:

- Evaluate the meeting: Do you want to meet again?
- Follow-up with a thank you card.
- Create an action plan based on what they told you to do.
- Execute the action plan.
- Ask for another meeting.

Honoring Your Mentors:

- Acknowledge their influence on you publicly.
- Write them letters letting them know the impact they've had on you.
- Buy them a gift.
- Promote their business, ministry, etc.
- Pass on what they've taught you.

Paying Back Your Mentors:

- Mentor a next generation leader and do for them what your mentor did for you.

XX. Conclusion

You now have the process you need to develop as many mentor relationships as you desire. It's my prayer that as you take the steps necessary to pursue mentorship, that God would open up doors for you to connect with people that will transform your life forever.

If you have used this process and it's helped you, I would love to hear about it. You can e-mail me at dougsmith@l3leadership.org or leave me a voicemail by going to dougsmithlive.com and clicking the 'Send Voicemail' tab.

If you have another process for getting appointments with mentors and following up, I would love to hear about it. I'm always looking to improve my processes.

“Thank you so much for reading this ebook. Remember, as Craig Groeschel said, “You are one relationship away from changing your destiny!” Now go find it!

XXI. Connect with Doug:

If at any point while you're reading this guide you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

You can best reach me on the following platforms:

- [L3 Leadership](#)
- [Doug Smith Live](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Periscope](#)

Even if you don't have any questions, I'd love to connect with you. If you want to reach me in private you can email me at dougsmith@l3leadership.org ”

About the Author:

Thank You So Much!

I hope you've enjoyed this eBook as much as I loved writing it for you. Thank you for taking time out of your day or evening to read this. I would love to hear what you think about it.

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Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to serve you. Feel free to e-mail me personally at dougsmith@l3leadership.org.

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Doug Smith is the founder of L3 Leadership, LLC, an organization devoted to developing leaders. He is also the Manager of Outreach and Major Gifts at Light of Life Rescue Mission, a non-profit that helps the homeless. in Pittsburgh.

He is married to his high school sweet heart, Laura, and they are expecting their first child in 2016!

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