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Mentoring Others

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4 Min Read

My wife and I recently sat at our dining room table over "It'll Kill Ya Pie," discussing with a young urban pastor and his wife their marriage, their parenting, and their ministry. It was a delightful evening. Ann and I are certainly no Aquila and Priscilla, but we know the importance of coaching and encouraging those who are younger in the faith. The evening brought to mind a ministry with which I am involved in another culture where the growing church is made up mostly of first-generation Christians. The members of the presbyteries know their theology fairly well, but when it comes to applying their theology in daily life, they desperately need help. It is one thing for us to teach systematic theology in intensive courses; it is another thing to help those who haven't seen it modeled learn how to raise children, or how to live together in harmony, or how to resolve interpersonal conflicts.

In [Titus 2](#), Paul instructs his pastor friend to teach what accords with sound doctrine. Titus was to teach sound doctrine (chap. 1), but he was also to teach what accords with sound doctrine, or what is fitting for sound doctrine. The context makes clear that what accords with sound doctrine is sanctified, reverent, godly love and wisdom. Even the best of classrooms can't teach these things. In [2 Timothy 3](#), Paul says that Timothy had followed his teaching, his conduct, his aim in life, his faith, his patience, his love, his steadfastness, his persecutions, and the sufferings that happened to him. Timothy was well mentored. Paul's discipling of Timothy certainly involved doctrine (listed first), but it included things that can best be fostered outside the pulpit.

[Second Timothy 2:2](#) says, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Notice the multiplication anticipated. Paul (first generation) instructed Timothy (second generation). Timothy would tell "faithful men" (third generation), who would be able to teach "others" (fourth generation). There is a proverb that most of us have heard that says if you give a man a fish, you will feed him for a day, but if you teach a man how to fish, you will feed him for a lifetime. Paul takes discipleship to yet another level. I've heard it said that the point of [2 Timothy 2:2](#) is to teach others not only to fish for themselves, but how to train fishermen who can in turn teach others also. If the Lord enables you and me to do that, we can feed an entire village, or even the world. But it will take biblical mentoring for that to happen.

In [1 Thessalonians 2](#), Paul speaks of his being gentle among the Thessalonians, like a nursing mother caring for her children. Have you ever watched a godly woman caring for

her young children? Such gentleness! Such patience! Such careful instruction! Such protective love! Paul was gentle with the Thessalonians like a nursing mother. He goes on to speak of being affectionately desirous of the church, ready to share not only the gospel, but his very life with them as well. And how did he live his life among them? In holy, righteous, and blameless conduct. For Paul, it was, "Do as I say, and do as I do." He goes on to say that like a father with his children, he exhorted, encouraged, and charged them to walk in a manner worthy of God. Notice that Paul summarizes his ministry by referencing the loving care of both a father and a mother. What great love Paul had for the church—love like a father and a nursing mother. One of my own pastoral mentors once said that you can tell your congregants almost anything if they know you love them, but if your congregation doesn't know you love them, you can't tell them much of anything.

Such mentoring is not reserved for ordained elders. They have a special role in shepherding, to be sure. To them have been given the keys of the kingdom, and they clearly have shepherding responsibilities that are reserved only for them. But mentoring is something that goes on in families, extended families, and in the church. Informally, it goes on without any encouragement because everyone will find someone to talk to about the issues of life. But let me encourage you (all of you reading this article will all be older and more mature than someone else in the church) to pray boldly for more opportunities to mentor others. [Titus 2](#) makes clear, for example, that older women are to train younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their husbands.

Jesus, before He sent out his disciples, called them to be with Him ([Mark 3:14](#)). Don't miss this "with Him" principle of discipleship. Jesus didn't just call men, fill them with doctrine, and send them out. That might have been a disaster. But He chose them that they might be with Him—observing, listening, asking questions, receiving His rebukes, growing, becoming like Him. Unlike what some have jokingly suggested today, He didn't lock His restless, zealous disciples in a cage for five years; instead, He called them to be "with Him" that He might at the right time send them out.

Let's thank the Lord for the mentors we have had and pray that God would give us more opportunities to mentor others. We not only have the Holy Spirit living within us, and we not only have God's Word to direct us—we also have undershepherds and others around us who have experienced life in ways that we have not. Let us build one another up in love and good deeds, from one generation to another.