

Mentoring with the Mindset of the Master

by Fred Chay

Think back through the years of your training. I am sure that one of the memories that come to mind is one of that certain person. Maybe it was a teacher or a pastor or just an older person who took you under his wing. The power of people in our lives is the principle of the incarnation. Our Lord often wraps truth in a person so that we can see the principle through the person.

Having had the privilege of serving with CMDS for seven years as the Western Regional Director and with Phoenix Seminary for the past eight years as Professor of Theology and Psychology, I have had the opportunity to focus on the ministry of mentoring. There are many similarities in personalities that take on the challenge to become healers, whether healers of the body, the soul or spirit. And as we are fast learning, the connection of this tri-unity of person-hood is inherently interconnected and divinely intertwined. Both professions, either ministry or medicine, attract competent, compassion filled people who are committed to helping people in need.

The concept of mentoring these days has achieved a common cultural popularity. It is a term that is found in business and education, as well as being a popular nostrum in the self-help industry. However, it is a two-edged sword that mentoring has become such a common, cliché term. The benefit is that there is more awareness of the need and nature of this vital role. It is a detriment however, when a term becomes part of the popular culture for it often loses its sense of unique importance. Mentoring has become bifurcated, severing truth from technique, when in reality both the foundation and function of mentoring are biblically based and fundamentally conjoined.

The Mandate

The ministry of mentoring or multiplication is not optional but essential. It is the centerpiece to the continuation of Christianity and the command of Christ. The mandate for this is seen in what is often called the Great Commission found in Matthew 28. It is often assumed that the Great Commission is exclusively a call to world evangelism. However, the structure of the sentence reveals that the main verb and the theme concern the command to "make disciples." This is encased with three participles: going, baptizing and teaching. Hence, the dual thrust of the Great Commission is both the evangelization of the lost, symbolized in baptizing, and the edification of the saved, signified in "teaching them all things I have commanded you". This is what we are to be about wherever we are going.

The biblical term is discipleship. Today we use the word "mentoring". One definition of a mentor given by Levingson in *Seasons of a Man's Life* is, "The mentor may act as a teacher to enhance the younger man's skills and intellectual development. Serving as a sponsor, he may use his influence to promote the young man's entry and advancement. He may be a host and guide, welcoming the initiate into a new occupational and social world and acquainting him with its value, customs, resources and cast of characters. Through his own virtues, achievements, and way of life, the mentor may be an

exemplar that the protégé can admire and seek to emulate. He may provide counsel and moral support in times of stress."

It is easy to see that at the social, vocational and spiritual levels people can benefit from being a mentor or having a mentor. Mentoring is a commitment to a journey with another person for a portion of time in their life. Along that journey the mentor's guidance helps the mentoree to identify potential pitfalls and develop techniques to avoid those things, which are destructive. Also, through the relationship mentors seek to encourage and affirm their mentoree's potential for success and growth in life.

The Model

Jesus not only manifested the "model" for this ministry in His lectures and lessons but also in the laboratory of life. One only needs to remember the model that Jesus left in His brief three-year ministry and the impact He had on the men in whom He invested His life in order to see the powerful effect of incarnating the truth. The crowds are often the setting of Jesus' signs and sermons. However, in the gospels it is the twelve and their roles that are highlighted. Frequently, the miracles and the messages from Jesus are directed toward the 12 disciples; and yet, upon further reflection, it is actually the three, Peter, James and John, often referred to as the "inner core" of Christ's community, who are selected to be the foci of individual attention and training. We, the readers, are instructed through their response to the Savior.

The model is also seen in the life and instruction of the great Apostle Paul whose ambition and desire was to present every man complete in Christ (Col. 1:28). It is debated whether the focus of Paul's desire was to evangelize or edify every man or both. But it is clear Paul directs people to the Savior. The ministry of mentoring and multiplication is clearly articulated by Paul as he instructs Timothy, his "mentoree" his protégé in the faith when he writes, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"(2 Timothy 2:2).

The Myths

There are many myths concerning mentoring that need to be mentioned. First, it is a myth of the first degree to assume that mentoring just happens. Mentoring in our fast paced society, accelerated in the field of medicine, is rendered a likely casualty to the demands of the clock. However, if we are led by the compass, we will see that it is not optional but essential to the Christian life. Mentoring is not instinctual but intentional. This does not mean that mentoring cannot be casual in style but that it must be conscious in its design. Have you made it your intention to mentor someone this year?

A second myth is that mentoring is easy. It is not. It requires commitment, compassion and competency. The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul demonstrate this through their lives and teaching. Fortunately, perfect people are not required, only those who are progressing in their own spiritual life. It is those who have FAITH (Faithful, Available, Initiators, Teachable, Humble) who are ready to don the mantle of mentoring. Do you sense you have the spiritual aptitude and attitude to mentor someone this year?

The third myth concerning mentoring is the attitude that mentoring is not really worth the effort. After all, isn't mentoring extremely time and labor intensive? Yes. Isn't it limited to just a few? Yes. Could I have a greater impact if I were to speak to thousands instead of a few? Perhaps. Yet, the divine blueprint and the ministry mandate reveal that the ministry of multiplication is the means to infect the few, who will in turn reach a few more, who will reach the world for Christ. Wrapping the truth around a person and incarnating the Love of God through people seems to be the Lord's way of reaching a lost and dying world.

Some myths concerning mentoring are hard to break, but the reason frequently has to do with our own fears and sense of inadequacies. Often we realize that we have never mentored someone or we recognize that no one has ever mentored us. So we rationalize that we could never mentor someone else. Are you ready to stop allowing your past to hinder you from participating in the greatest adventure of guiding men and women in developing their walk with the Lord Jesus?

The Manifestation

Mentors are those with whom we share the lows and celebrate the highs in life together. Mentors are those rare individuals in life who love us deeply, see our greatest potentials, cheer us on to greatness, correct us when needed, teach us selflessly about life, become our friend and at whose funeral we weep unashamedly.

Mentorees are those teachable, eager people for whom God places in our hearts a concern and commitment. They are those gifted people who may at times need our affirmation, acceptance and approval. Mentorees are people we see worthy of the investment of our life energy and whose troubled phone call in the night is seen as a sign of trust more than an inconvenience, burden or bother. They are seen as a brother.

The Mindset

Let me suggest a Mindset to Mentoring.

- Purpose is the key.

If you keep in mind the biblical mandate and model as your ultimate purpose, then your life will conform to the Great Commission. Principle-Centered decisions must replace pragmatic distractions. The demands on your time and energy are endless. Hence, it is imperative that you make decisions that are in accordance with your purpose. This allows you to live by the compass instead of the clock. It also allows you to say "no" because you are saying "yes" to your ministry purpose.

- Priorities are Essential.

Things that matter least must never come about at the expense of things that matter most. Most of us spend time each week prioritizing our schedule. However, we should schedule our priorities. The difference is enormous. If you are considering the ministry of mentoring, then make it your intention, make it a priority and set your schedule around your ministry. Remember, anything less than a conscious decision for the important is an unconscious decision for the unimportant.

· Personality not Professionalism

In order to impact you need to be close enough to infect. Don't allow professionalism to block the relationship from blossoming. Make sure your relationship is real and not a feigned friendship. Be authentic not antiseptic. You do not need to try to impress those whom you mentor. By nature of your position and place in life, that is a given. What is needed is a relationship that is rich with your personality and the profundity and wisdom that the Lord has given you in your walk with Him. This is what you have to impart and this is how you will influence.

Most of us desire to give ourselves to that which is bigger than ourselves. We long to be involved in a cause that is significant. We have been given the great task and responsibility for a great cause, one that is eternally significant. It is called the Kingdom of God. The mission is a ministry of multiplication. The Lord Jesus has not changed his mandate or His methods. We are it.