

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 4-8-18

April 8 we will have a topical study of relationships in spiritual mentoring. Discussion questions are:

1. Can you identify a positive mentoring relationship in your life? What made it good?
2. Have you had a negative mentoring relationship in your life? What made it bad?
3. Who have you invited into a mentoring relationship?
4. How have you implemented the “pass it on” command given in II Timothy 2:2 in your relationships?
5. What is implied by “with him” in Mark 3:14?
  - a. How many excuses can you think of for people deciding they cannot do what Jesus did in Mark 3:14?
6. What is the correlation between Mark 3:14 and Acts 4:13?
  - a. How would it make you feel for someone to notice that you had been “with Jesus?”
7. When the Thessalonians heard I Ts. 2:8 read to them for the first time, how do you think they reacted?
8. How comfortable are you with this truism: *You are the curriculum of what it means to follow Jesus.*
9. Agree/disagree: *It's not what happened to you that matters. It's what you do with what happened to you that matters!*
10. Agree/disagree: *You learn far more from failure than you ever learn from success.*
  - a. How have you experienced the truth of that statement?
  - b. If you agree with the statement, how should that effect your willingness to be a mentor?
11. If you decide to get serious about becoming a mentor what is step 1?

### Sermon: *On Having A Mentoring Relationship*



History often turns on the smallest of events. 200 miles northwest of Jerusalem is a small Mediterranean island called Cyprus. On this island lived a man named Joses who was an unassuming Jew. We don't know how he came to faith in Jesus. Perhaps he was among the 3,000 who heard Peter's first sermon and came to faith. We do know the depth of Joses' newfound faith is shown in the sale of some or all of his property and giving the proceeds to the

benevolence fund of the Jerusalem church. Following custom, the church leaders gave Josea a new name, “Son of Encouragement” or “Barnabas.” It was Barnabas who came to the aid of Saul after his Damascus road experience and mentored him in the faith. It was Barnabas who took Saul and brought him to the Apostles, defending his conversion and gaining him access to the believers. It was Barnabas who travelled with Paul on his missionary journeys and eventually allowed Paul to take the lead. Without Barnabas there would have been no Paul.

If I were to ask you this morning, “Who are the people who have made you what you are today?” most of us would have a list. We would probably mention our parents but also acknowledge that our lives are littered with other people who have influenced us along our journey. Key people in your life have transferred skills and knowledge to you. The word for that is “mentoring.” We recognize the value of that in skilled occupations like machinist, bricklayer, electrician, mechanic, etc. What I hope we leave here today recognizing is that mentoring is also how faith is meant to be passed on. Paul explained the process to his young protégé, Timothy, *You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.* – II Timothy 2:2 That is what Jesus did with his disciples. *He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him.* - Mark 3:14 He was passing it on. You see that same mentoring process throughout scripture with Moses and Joshua, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah and Elisha, Deborah and Barak, and Paul with Timothy, Titus, Luke, Onesimus, Crispus, Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, Erastus, Gaius, Tertius, Quartus, Sosthenes, Chloe, and Phoebe. So mentoring is a very Biblical concept.

The most significant example of mentoring in the New Testament is the unique approach to developing leaders Jesus modeled when he taught his 12 disciples. Instead of offering formal training like Gamaliel, where students would memorize the written law and the oral tradition transmitted by generations of rabbis, Jesus simply taught his followers to draw close to him. When Peter and John stood before the religious leaders of the day accused of spreading false teaching, those religious leaders were astonished that uneducated, common men spoke with such boldness. It was then that *“they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”* (Acts 4:13). Jesus instituted a different way of training disciples. Instead of relying on formal education, he called his disciples to live and learn with him as they went through life. For Jesus, mentoring was a lifestyle, a relationship where the mentor would impart wisdom to the mentee as they encountered every day challenges.

There is an overwhelming need for spiritual mentors in the church today. Do you know what the biggest problem is with young people today? It’s not drugs or alcohol or sexual promiscuity. It’s that there aren’t enough people from the generations ahead of them pouring into them and investing in their lives. If you leave here this morning not understanding that you need to make it your goal to become a mentor to someone younger in the faith, you will have completely missed to point of this message.

So what is mentoring? Mentoring is a relational experience in which one person opens and shares their life with others, enabling another to maximize the grace of God in his/her life and service. Paul, who spent so much energy mentoring younger believers, put it this way, *“...so we*

*cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but **our lives** as well.*” – *I Thessalonians 2:8* God’s plan for teaching others what it means to follow Jesus isn’t just a book. It’s you! You are the curriculum of what it means to follow Jesus.

If you saw *Forrest Gump* you can finish this sentence: “Life is like a . . . .” Let me suggest your life isn’t like a box of chocolates. It is like a treasure chest. You are a unique blend of family experiences, successes, failures, academic opportunities, learning disabilities, extraordinary IQ, people you’ve met, people you’ve not met, places you’ve lived, places you could only visit, etc. You are such a unique blend of all you have experienced that you are a unique treasure. You have to figure out a way to leverage all of this for somebody or some group of somebodies who have fallen under the umbrella of your influence.

Some of you would say, “I can’t do that because of my marriage. It’s troubled.” That makes you an even better candidate. Who do you think can best help an alcoholic – someone like me who’s never touched drop of alcohol or someone who has suffered greatly from addiction to alcohol? Who better to talk to someone considering divorce that someone who has endured the pain of divorce? Who better to talk to someone about the damage divorce does to the children than someone who, to this day, has dysfunctional children because of their divorce? It’s not what happened to you that matters. It’s what you do with what happened to you that matters!

Some of you have had extraordinary leadership opportunities. Some you handled well, some not so well. God has gifted you in such a way that people follow you. Whether you’ve been faithful to that gift or not, you have surely learned from failure as well as from success. It’s not what happened to you that matters. It’s what you do with what happened to you that matters!

Some of you have made significant amounts of money. Some have been good stewards. Some have lost a fortune through bad decisions. Are you telling me if you set down with a newlywed couple to answer their questions about money, you would have no advice to offer from your experiences, both good and bad? It’s not what happened to you that matters. It’s what you do with what happened to you that matters!

Every single person here has had to handle some kind of conflict – relationship conflict, money conflict, conflict at work, conflict with in-laws, conflict with parents, conflict with neighbors, conflict with church members. Satan will tell you that makes you unqualified to help others with their conflict. The exact opposite is true. Your conflict, whether you handled it rightly or wrongly, helps qualify you to help others who are in similar conflict today. It’s not what happened to you that matters. It’s what you do with what happened to you that matters!

All of you have some kind of spiritual background. Maybe you left the church and came back. Maybe you spent some years sowing your wild oats. Maybe your track record is one of steady spiritual growth since the day you were baptized. Again, success or failure spiritually is not the issue. Willingness to be open and honest about your journey is the issue. There is a man named Frank Morrison who was a first class skeptic. He absolutely rejected the authenticity of the resurrection story in the Bible. He was an attorney and decided to write a book debunking the Bible’s account of the resurrection. When he finished the book he had written one of the greatest

defenses of the resurrection ever penned. His book is titled, *Who Moved the Stone*. The point is God can and wants to use your faith journey to help others in their journey. It's not what happened to you that matters. It's what you do with what happened to you that matters!

A lot of you have raised kids. Some of you have endured the pain of having a child die. Some of you know the agony of a child becoming the prodigal son or daughter. Some of you don't want to talk about your lost child because you think it reflects poorly on your parenting. Did you know those stories you don't want to tell equip you with a unique message other parents desperately need to hear. It's not what happened to you that matters. It's what you do with what happened to you that matters!

What every person here over the age of 40 knows is, you learn far more from failure than you ever learn from success! Some of you don't think you have a treasure chest of experience worth sharing because there are skeletons in your closet and you think those skeletons disqualify you from ever mentoring anyone spiritually. But one day you will encounter someone who needs to hear about the very skeleton you are hiding because the key to their heart is you telling them your story. Wouldn't you say it was a pretty embarrassing skeleton to walk around knowing you had participated in killing Christians? Paul uses his failure for the glory of God. *For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. But by the grace of God I am what I am. – I Corinthians 15:9-10* If Paul hadn't acknowledged his failure we would not understand how far the grace of God reaches. I'm telling you when you let God use your failure you will have a more powerful influence than you ever dreamed possible.

So you are this unique blend of successes and failures. Now here's the question for you – what are you going to do with this? Do you know what most people do with it? They bury it. If that's what you choose to do, you need to know that when your life ends the value of your life ends with you. You can be such a blessing to the newest generations among us by just sharing your stories. If you do you will be glad you did and if you don't there will come a day when you wish you had. The value of a life is always determined by how much of it was given away.

If you are under age 40 here is a great truth you will learn as you age: The closer you get to the end of your life the more you will find meaning in the lives you have shaped. You won't find meaning in the money you made or the things you collected or the promotions you gained but you will find meaning in the lives you shaped! The value of a life is always determined by how much of it was given away.

If you ever have the opportunity to be mentored by someone you respect spiritually, jump at the opportunity. Seeing a godly life lived out up close and personal is an invaluable benefit in your spiritual journey. Nothing will fast track your spiritual growth more than putting yourself in an accountability relationship with someone you respect spiritually. Nothing will bring you more encouragement in your relationship with Christ than someone whose goal it is to be your encourager.

Let's take a quick look at how mentoring occurred in the lives of some of the spiritual giants described in the Bible. Look at how Moses mentors Joshua. Do you remember that story about

Israel battling the Amalekites and Moses standing on top of a hill holding up his hand? When he lowers his hand, Amalek prevails. When he holds his hand high, Israel prevails. Moses gets so tired they have to prop his hands on the shoulders of Aaron and Hur. Guess who was constantly looking up on the hill for the encouraging signs of Moses holding up his hands? While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them. Moses commanded Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand." – Exodus 17:8-9 Can you imagine how infused with courage Joshua was every time he looked up at the top of that hill and saw his mentor standing there holding the staff of God? When Moses goes up on Mt. Sinai to meet with God he takes Joshua with him as far as he can. Can you imagine their conversations as they discussed that meeting? On another occasion Moses goes into the Tent of Meeting to meet with God and this time Joshua is allowed to remain. Exodus 33:7-11 - <sup>7</sup>Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. <sup>8</sup>And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. <sup>9</sup>As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. <sup>10</sup>Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. <sup>11</sup>The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

When I think of healthy mentoring relationships I think of conversations between Moses and Joshua reflecting on what it was like to be in God's presence. I think of conversations between Barnabas and Paul reflecting on the adventures of the day in serving the Lord. I think of conversations between Jesus and Peter, Jesus and John, Jesus and James...conversations where he not only shared his teachings with them, but shared his life experiences.

Hopefully your appetite for mentorship has been whetted this morning. Hopefully you are willing to seriously consider becoming a mentor or being mentored by someone you respect. If you want to be a mentor you have to do 2 things: (1) You have to make yourself available. (2) You have to be intentional. Most people aren't going to come up to you and ask you to invest in them. You will have to take the first step. That's one of the qualifications of being a mentor – caring enough to take the first step.

I want to encourage you this morning to see yourself as a vital link in a chain that reaches all the way back to Jesus. Jesus mentors 12. Barnabas follows that model and mentors Paul. Paul follows that model and mentors not only Timothy but dozens of others. That chain has continued for almost 2,000 years and includes those spiritual giants who mentored you. Now it's your turn. Don't break the chain. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others. – II Timothy 2:2 If you have been blessed by receiving great spiritual training throughout your formative years, pass it on!

VIDEO: <http://www.mentoring.org/why-mentoring/mentoring-stories/> (see "Joe and Robin")