



Mentoring: The Ministry of Multiplication

By James G. Poitras

“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus” (Acts 9:26-27).

Mentoring is a relationship between two people, the mentor and the one being mentored.

Long ago when the Greek warrior Odysseus went off to battle in the Trojan War, he left his young son in the hands of a man named Mentor. The father was away from his son for twenty years and when he returned home his son had grown into a man. He had been trained by Mentor.

Because of this story we now say a mentor is someone who operates as a father figure in our lives.

The Bible says, “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17). People tend to become like those they associate with. One man said, “Show me your friends, and I will tell you what kind of person you are.” A mentor can encourage you to do your best. He sees your potential and assists you to be the person God has called you to be. He is interested in your personal growth and development. Howard Hendricks says a mentor is committed to two things: “Helping you grow and keeping you growing.”

One great mentor in the Scripture (and there are many) would be the Apostle Paul. He drew Timothy to himself and mentored him. In 2 Timothy 2:1-2 he said, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” What a tremendous definition of not only discipleship, but mentoring.

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Another great mentor was Barnabas. Originally he was called Joses (Acts 4:36-37) but when he sold his property in Cyprus and gave the proceeds to the Church, the leaders gave him a new name, Barnabas. This means “Son of Encouragement.” After the Damascus experience, he became a mentor to Paul. None of the other leaders wanted to have anything to do with Paul. Later we find him and Paul traveling together as missionaries spreading the gospel. Barnabas was entering the ministry of multiplication when he mentored Paul. Because he mentored Paul he had an extended impact on many cities in the ancient world. It was because of this same ministry of multiplication that Jethro encouraged Moses to appoint other leaders to judge the children of Israel (Exodus 18:14-23). One proverb says, “The person who helps you carry your load does not develop a hump.” (This means it is good to help someone else but not to completely take over another’s burdens.) Another says, “If you get your bundle ready, you will be helped to place it on your head.”

In Africa, as well as other parts of the world the community is regarded as an environment for realizing the potential of every individual. The Akan maxim says, “If you do not allow your neighbor to have [or reach] nine, you will not have [or reach] ten.”

Deuteronomy 6:1-14 allows us to see clearly that the gospel needs to be passed from generation to generation.

Failing to do this could remove Christianity from the family lineage in just one generation. Even David asked God to enable him to, “shew thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to everyone that is to come” (Psalm 71:18). We all know that an “old man is like a library.” He has stored much wisdom in his mind and this needs to be passed on to the future generations.

Howard and William Hendricks in their book, *As Iron Sharpens Iron* suggests mentoring was a way of life in Bible times. It was the primary method of handing down skills and wisdom from one generation to another. In their book they provide a list of some of the more prominent mentoring relationships.

Jethro and Moses	(Exodus 18)
Moses and Joshua	(Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 34:9)
Moses and Caleb	(Numbers 13; 14:6-9; 34:16-19; Joshua 14:6-15)
Samuel and Saul	(1 Samuel 9:15)
Samuel and David	(1 Samuel 16; 19:18-24)
Jonathan and David	(1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42)

Elijah and Elisha	(1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2:1-16; 3:11)
Barnabas and Saul	(Acts 9:26-30; 11:22-30)
Barnabas and John	(Acts 15:36-39; 2 Timothy 4:11)
Priscilla, Aquilla,	(Acts 18:1-3; 24-28) and Apollos
Paul and Timothy	(Acts 16:1-3; 1 and 2 Timothy)
Paul and Titus	(2 Corinthians 7:6, 13-15; Titus)