

- ***READ II Timothy 2:1-7*** Here in **II Timothy 2:1**, we read of Paul referring to Timothy as his son. This isn't the first time we see this. Just a few verses earlier he even refers to Timothy as his "*beloved son*." (**II Timothy 1:2**) This might not sound like that big of a deal until we remember that Paul... well...he was never married according to what we read in **I Corinthians 7:7**. So how is it that Paul refers to Timothy as his son? To answer this question we need to go to the first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. In **I Timothy 1:2**, we read, "*To Timothy, my true child in the faith*." Paul's relationship with Timothy wasn't one where they were related by blood. Instead, they were joined together by the blood of Jesus in spiritual fellowship.
- We first find Paul first being introduced to Timothy back in **Acts 16:1-3**. As Paul is in Derbe and Lystra, he comes to hear of a disciple named Timothy who was of mixed ethnic background. His dad was a Greek, but his mom was a Jewish woman who was also a believer. He was so well spoken of by the brethren that Paul decides that he wants to take him along with him on his preaching trips. He even takes Timothy and circumcises him! I don't believe that Timothy would've gone along with such a thing if he wasn't fully convinced of Paul's pure intentions of simply spreading the Gospel. What takes place from this point on is one of the great mentoring stories of the Bible.
- You might pause and wonder... "*where does it say that Paul mentored Timothy?*" While it is true that the Bible never expressly states that Paul was Timothy's mentor, the idea is pretty clearly assumed in Scripture. I am very convinced that Paul was willing to refer to Timothy as his "*beloved son*" and "*son in the faith*" because they had developed that type of relationship during their time spent together. This relationship certainly had an impact on Timothy and his faith, and we need to recognize that the importance of mentoring within our own lives and in the church, today.
- If we are truly wanting to be a church that is growing mightily and prevailing in this place, then we need to recognize the strong impact that mentoring (**having an older more experienced person seeking to lead and/or train up a younger less experienced person**) will have on achieving such desires. When it really comes down to it...one of the main goals in mentoring the younger generations is to prepare them to take our places one day. We might not like to think about ourselves needing to be replaced, but we'll talk about why this is an important work for us to be involved in here in a few minutes when we begin to conclude. Before we get there, we will begin by establishing the fact that mentoring while never being mentioned in the Bible is a vital part of it, and then we will spent a few minutes talking about how we can be mentors to those that are coming along after us. Let's begin in the Old Testament to show some examples of how the work of mentoring is a long standing Biblical principle.

I. The work of mentoring is found all throughout the Bible.

A. We see mentoring early on in the Old Testament.

1. The first example of mentorship from the Old Testament that comes to my mind is that of Elijah and Elisha from **I Kings 19**. In this text we find out that Elijah has had a real tough go having to deal with the evil leadership of Ahab and Jezebel. He is literally running for his life, and in his mind it is time to throw in the towel. We find him in **I Kings 19:13-21** hiding in a cave and covering his face when the Lord comes to him and tells him that his ministry as a prophet is not yet over. His new mission was to raise up the next prophet that would come after him. Elijah is then sent to Elisha. He puts his mantle around Elisha's neck and after saying goodbye to his family, we find Elisha going following and ministering to Elijah as his protege. From that point on until his own departure, Elijah taught and instructed Elisha in such a way that he was able to fulfill his calling of being God's prophet to His people. There is no doubt that Elijah's mentoring of Elisha changed his life for the better.

2. Many more examples could be considered such as Moses and Jethro, Eli and Samuel, Mordecai and Esther, and so on, but suffice it to say that the Old Testament is full of old experienced persons who sought to help the younger less experienced person to grow and mature in a strong and positive way before the Lord. Things didn't really change much once we arrive in the New Testament writings.

B. Mentoring was a major factor in Jesus's ministry and in the early church.

1. If ever there was a proper example of mentoring done right, it must be the mentoring that took place between Jesus and His Apostles. In past years, mentorships were full-time works where the protegee would follow the mentor everywhere in order to learn the ins and outs of whatever they were seeking to learn. Is this not exactly what Jesus did with these twelve individuals? Of course it was! For around three years these men were constantly with one another. The Apostles observed their Mentor and Master. They asked questions of Him continually, and they were strengthened by that time spent with Him prior to His death and even after His resurrection. Jesus's mentoring of the Apostles was certainly one of His main focuses during His time on the earth.
2. Once the church was established, it was still commonplace for more experienced disciples to take younger less experienced disciples under their wings in order to help them grow in knowledge, faith, and abilities. Consider the examples of Barnabas and Paul in the book of Acts. We have already considered Paul and Timothy, but even before we find Paul meeting Timothy, we'll see that he was already busy in the business of mentoring alongside Barnabas. We first see Barnabas taking care of Paul and trying to endear him to the brethren in Jerusalem in **Acts 9:27**, and it didn't take long for Paul to hit the ground running in his mission of ministering in the Gospel. At the end of **Acts 12** we find Barnabas and Paul taking on a protegee in John Mark. Later on at the end of **Acts 15**, we see Barnabas going with John Mark and Paul taking on Silas. It is at this point that Paul meets Timothy, and these two men spend many years together from this point on in the working of the ministering of the Gospel. Paul eventually takes on a mentoring role with another young preacher by the name of Titus to whom he also writes a letter of instruction that is contained within our New Testament.
3. We could also point to other examples such as Peter's writings to the receiving elders in **I Peter 5**, Priscilla and Aquilla teaching Apollos, and even many of Paul's epistles contain many marks of him seeking to mentor the disciples that were in different places in which he had visited at one time or another. It can't be escaped that mentoring was a huge factor in the growth and strengthening of the church in the early years, and we must realize the need for us to continue in this work today...but how can it be done? What does it look like.

II. Mentoring can take many different forms.

A. We see Jesus, Paul, and others mentoring through the examples of the lives they lived.

1. In **Matthew 11:29**, Jesus is inviting the masses to come and follow Him. He tells them, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.*" Jesus offers Himself as an example of whom others should consider. The way He lived His life on earth is exactly the manner in which we would do well to emulate.
2. This was exactly what Paul did, and this is reflected in his words from **I Corinthians 11:1**, "*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*" He mentioned similar things to both the Philippians and the Thessalonians. "*These things you have learned and recited and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*" (**Philippians 4:9**) "*For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example.*" (**II Thessalonians 4:7**) Much benefit can be had in a mentoring relationship simply through the examples than we can provide to those who look up to us as those whom they can learn from.

3. Paul brings this to our level when he writes to the older men and women and how they ought to be behaving in their lives so that they could provide a proper example for those younger than them. *“Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in the faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.” (Titus 2:2-5)* By the examples of these older disciples, the younger disciples can be taught how they ought to behave themselves as members of the Lord's body. And yet there is more than can be done that just simply living godly examples...there can also be active teaching and instruction that is taking place.

B. Face to face teaching and instruction is centrally key in quality mentoring.

1. Notice in **Titus 2:6-8** that Paul writes, *“Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”* The examples are good, but sometimes young people need to be sat down and taught how they can be what God wants for them to be.
2. This was surely done through face to face contact as we can infer from what we read back in **Philippians 4:9** when Paul talks about those learning through what they received and heard from Paul, but this can also be seen back in our opening Text of **II Timothy 2:2** when Paul writes, *“The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*
3. The face to face teaching and instruction is key in mentoring, but notice that Paul also does much teaching and instructing through his letters to Timothy. I think first of what he writes in the first letter to the young man when he writes, *“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” (I Timothy 4:12)* Through these many many other teachings, Timothy himself could come to serve as an example to others! And not just Timothy, but countless other disciples were able to grow in their faith and service to God because of Paul's efforts in setting the example and teaching...the least of which certainly wouldn't be the Ephesian elders that he speaks of setting the example for and teaching. **(Acts 20:27-35)**
4. Mentoring doesn't require rocket science. It doesn't demand a degree It only demands a strong faith and some attention to be paid to those who are coming up after us, and it also demands for those younger people to have a true desire to learn of God and grow in their own faiths. And this work isn't something that is optional. Instead, this is something that must be done because of a few reasons we will consider as we come to a close.

III. Mentoring is important because:

A. We will not be around forever.

1. Jesus was well aware that He would not be around forever to lead His people, and this fact wasn't something that Jesus ignored. Instead, He was open about this being the case and sought to make preparations for such a time to come to pass. In His farewell address to the Apostles before His death in **John 13-17**, Jesus speaks of His going away, but he also promises that a new Helper or mentor would come to guide the Apostles into all truth. **(John 16:7-13)**
2. Jesus couldn't stay with them forever, and the same is true for us. Though we might right now be the leaders of the church in this place, the truth is that we are not going to be around forever. It is appointed for each of us to pass from this life at some point as long as this world is still standing, and that is not a fact that we can escape.

3. Therefore, we must be using our time wisely in helping to mentor those who are coming up after us because the church is still going to need strong godly leadership in all areas once we have passed on. This church is going to need godly husbands and wives. It is going to need faithful dads and moms. It is going to need strong teachers, shepherds, deacons, and preachers. One day we will be unable to serve in these positions. One day we will pass on, so who will be replacing us? We know it will be those up and coming generations.

B. The younger people of today will one day be in our place.

1. Jesus was well aware that He would not be around forever to lead His people, and thus He sought to prepare His Apostles to be those who would *“sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* (**Matthew 19:28**) Are we seeking to help those coming up after us to be prepared to sit in the places that we sit right now? Are we helping them to be prepared to lead in the way that we are leading right now? Are we going to be like Jesus, Paul, Peter, and others who did what they could to prepare them for that reality?
2. The fact of the matter is that whether they’ll admit it or not...young people crave mentoring from those they perceive as being what they hope to be one day. One article I was reading stating that their research showed that 45% of unchurched young people admitted that being able to receive advice from people of similar life experiences was important to them. That’s a pretty solid number, but it jumps up when they spoke with young people who were religious. 68% of those young people stated that they saw it as important to have those older people take them under their wings and teach them how to be what they ought to be.
3. For those young people who are maturing and looking towards the future, they are becoming aware that by themselves they will be being the 8-ball if they try to do it all on their own. Therefore, we who are older and more experienced must step up and seek to mentor them and show them the ways of maturation within the Lord. They’ll be in our shoes one day no matter what...the only variable is whether they will be prepared or not and some of that will depend on what we are willing to do to help them...and help them we must! Even they one day might be mentors to those who come after them in leaving the people of God.

C. It doesn’t take many generations for the Lord to be forgotten.

1. It could very well be that Eli tried at some point to give great efforts towards mentoring and teaching his sons...we don’t know if this is the case. We do know for certain that the Lord rebuked him for not doing more at some point in their life of wickedness. (**I Samuel 3:13**) Regardless, the end result was his house being destroyed.
2. The same thing can be seen within the story of Israel when there arose a generation that did not know God. (**Judges 2:10**) The previous generation knew the Lord and served Him...and yet the next generation did not glorify God in their lives. They instead sought the baals and served the Ashtaroth. It doesn’t take long for things to go sideways, and that is especially true when generations fail to do their part in mentoring and bringing up the next generation in the Lord. It can easily happen to us just the same, or we can do our part and lessen those chances.

It could very well be that we hear the idea of mentoring, and our minds automatically go to the idea of volunteering time at the YMCA or the Boys and Girls club, but we must recognize that there is much need for mentoring even among this group of God’s people. Just look around and you will see a future husband, wife, mom, dad, elder, deacon, and maybe even a preacher or two. That potential lies within many here this morning, so who among us will step up to mentor and bring these young people along? Surely we have seen the importance and how to, so it is now up to us to put in the time and effort to be about this important work that is before us. May our God bless us and strengthen us to do it well.