

Mentorship in Ministry: Passing the Torch

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2013

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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ABSTRACT

Mentorship is a key function of the Church. If intentional effort to pass the torch of ministry through mentorship is not taken, then in one generation the Church will be dead or crippled. Though much has been written on mentorship, most have approached the topic by matching their methods with biblical teaching rather than starting in the Bible and developing their methods from it. A search for examples of mentorship that exist in the Old and New Testament will synthesize to form methods and principles which biblical characters used. These methods and principles are evaluated and then contextualized for the modern Christian to form a foundation which can be used as a strong basis for the creation of any mentorship program.

WHY A THESIS ON MENTORSHIP?

The Need

Raising up leaders in the next generation is crucial to the survival of any group, and especially to the Church. If intentional effort to pass the torch of ministry by training up those to follow is not taken by Christians, then in one generation the Church will be ill-equipped to survive at best, and dead at worst. Because of the enormous weight that rests on the matter of mentoring the next generation of Christians, the topic should be seriously considered. Christians have published thousands of books and articles wrestling with the matter of mentorship; however few are products of exegesis (drawing out a message first from Scripture),¹ but rather eisegesis (reading one's own desired meaning into Scripture).² Fewer yet are products of a survey of the entirety of Scripture's teaching on mentorship, but rather a case study of one particular instance. As such, there is a need to add such a collection of research to the field of biblical mentorship.

The Solution

Because of a lack of coverage elsewhere, there is a need to research how to train the next generation of Christians to follow in ministry. Looking for biblical principles from a purely biblical evaluation of various portions of both the Old and New Testaments is the best way to make up this deficit in research. After this, it will be easier to synthesize timeless methods and principles for mentorship and examine how the

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 55.

²Ibid.

principles can be used in both a positive and negative sense. If followed, these biblical methods and principles will be able to inform Christians in ministry how to effectively pass the torch of ministry to the next generation of Christian leaders.

Framing the Issue

For almost 2000 years the church of Jesus Christ has existed as a beacon in a dark world leading people to Christ. However, church buildings are not what have made a difference in the world for centuries. People have made the difference; it has been the Church Universal, or all who genuinely have saving faith in Christ. This importance placed on people is consistent with Jesus' initial commands to the original Church to be salt and light to the world (Matt. 5:13-16 HCSB)³ and to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). While this command is clearly made to the entire Church for all time, the question over how to do this best does not have a clear answer.

Throughout church history, Christians have employed different methods to mentor other believers. Out of a desire to serve God in the most efficient way possible, the question of how to do this best has arisen countless times. As a divinely inspired manual for life, the Bible has of course been consulted for direction in this dispute. Unfortunately, there is no place in the Bible which makes a definitive claim regarding how to train up the next generation of Christians. However, there are examples given of mentors in the Bible from whose success we can learn positive lessons. In addition, there are people who did not do well in mentoring others, from whom we can learn negative lessons.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations will come from the HCSB translation.

Clarification

The Bible contains many examples of what people today would consider mentorship. However, the concept of mentorship is a modern American idea. Thus, there is no truly biblical definition of mentorship because that word is not in the ancient Hebrew or Greek vernacular. To make the matter more difficult, when there are instances of people in the Bible who seem to be effective mentors, their mentorship is rarely a primary (or even secondary) focus of the overall biblical narrative. Thus, biblical examples which speak directly to mentorship are almost non-existent, if not entirely so. Because of this, people involved in church ministries often develop a method of mentorship which works for them and then look to the Bible for proof-texts. That eisegetical approach will not be used here. Rather, the purpose is to find examples in Scripture which fit a modern definition of mentorship and then uncover what principles, positive and negative, contribute to the matter of mentorship.

One definition for mentorship is that mentorship is “a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing their wisdom and resources.”⁴ A more encompassing definition of mentorship is that mentorship is “an intentional and appropriately reciprocal relationship between two individuals, a younger ... and an older, wiser figure who assists the younger person in learning the ways of life.”⁵ Parks is reserved in who she attributes the title of mentor to, but recognizes that mentors are people who show recognition, support, challenge, inspiration, and accountability to their

⁴ Tim Elmore, *Lifegiving Mentors: A Guide for Investing Your Life in Others* (Duluth, GA: Growing Leaders, Inc., 2009), 2.

⁵ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Emerging Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 165.

mentee.⁶ Thus, different types of relationships can become mentor relationships if properly conducted. This means that subcategories of mentorship exist such as teacher-student relationships, parent-child relationships, friend-friend relationships, coach-athlete relationships, discipleship relationships, etc. To avoid becoming exclusive, the primary focus of this thesis will be mentorship in general, with brief mention of specific areas of mentorship only briefly being mentioned when they arise in the text. However, a more sizable section will be devoted to discussing discipleship in the Gospels because of the ease in ascertaining significant application of discipleship principles for all areas of Christian mentorship. Also, as God incarnate, Jesus is the most worthy mentor from whom we can learn effective techniques.

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON MENTORSHIP

Old Testament

Moses' Training of Joshua

One of the finest areas of effective mentorship, and a resulting smooth transfer of power, is in the case of Moses and Joshua. As a result of an incident where Moses disobeyed God's command (Num. 20:2-13), Moses was not allowed to bring the Israelites out of the desert and into the Promised Land. Taking God's chosen people to the brink of the Promised Land, he ascended to Mount Nebo, a high mountain on the eastern edge of the Jordan River opposite the city of Jericho where the Israelites would

⁶ Parks, *Big Questions*, 167.

eventually enter the Promised Land.⁷ Here Moses died and was buried by God Himself (Deut. 34:1-8). However, the Israelites were not plunged into leaderless anarchy because Moses had already appointed someone to take over for him: Joshua.

Moses picked out Joshua to replace him soon after leaving Egypt and made his decision known to the Israelites by laying his hands on Joshua (Deut. 34:9). Though uncommon in today's church, this was "a rite that symbolized the transference of covenant authority and responsibility from the one to the other."⁸ This physical demonstration marked the recipient as one who had God's guiding Spirit imparted to him. As a result, the Israelites trusted his leadership. However, the transfer to Joshua was not a haphazard choice on Moses' part. Rather, Joshua was a man who proved his character to Moses numerous times, and as a result, Moses had been intentionally preparing Joshua for the day when he would fill his mentor's shoes.

In picking a person to train to take his place, Moses found an exceptional protégé in the person of Joshua. Joshua is first mentioned in Exodus 17 where Moses chose him as a military captain to combat the Amalekite forces which were attacking the Israelites in the wilderness. Joshua obeyed all of Moses' orders and led Israel to victory. The next time Joshua is mentioned is when God entrusted the Ten Commandments to Moses. The Bible calls Joshua Moses' *assistant* this time and says that he went with Moses "up into the mountain of God" (Ex. 24:13). The use of this Hebrew word for servant, *srt*, is most often found in servant relationship. Particularly this is often the description of Samuel to God (1 Sam. 2:11, 18; 3:1) and the kingly servants to David (I Kgs. 1:15; 10:5). It was at

⁷ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia*, 1533.

⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, vol. 4, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 454.

this time with the absence of their leader when the Israelites fell into idolatry with the golden calf. Even Aaron fell into idolatrous practices, but Moses and Joshua alone are cited as not partaking in the sins of the nation. In fact, Joshua alerted Moses to a potential issue in the Israelite camp leading to the eventual restitution of the Israelites (Ex. 32:17).

The next prominent role Joshua played was in the spying of out of the Promised Land. Called to be one of the twelve men who would infiltrate and evaluate the area God promised to the Israelites (Num. 13:16), Joshua again proved himself to be a man of faith. Though all the spies came back with a positive report of the vitality of the land, ten of the twelve spies were fearful of the inhabitants and dissuaded the Israelites from seizing the land. Caleb and Joshua alone stood by their conviction that God would provide protection for the people, meet their needs, and help them conquer (Num. 14:6-9). Of course Joshua was showing boldness, but the positive leadership traits he expressed did not end there. Knowing that a cowardly choice on the part of the Israelites would bring God's displeasure, Joshua made a final, hopeless effort to bring the people to their senses and possibly deliver their own souls.⁹ This impassioned plea to the people proved ineffective, but God recognized Caleb's and Joshua's faithfulness and these two alone in their generation were allowed eventual entrance into the Promised Land.

Joshua was not only a man of impeccable character, but also a man on whom God laid His Spirit (Num. 27:18). The Hebrew word for spirit, *ruah*, is vague, not indicating what spirit is being referenced. However, Cole points out that while, "the term spirit connotes a reference to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, or a spirit of leadership ... the

⁹ *Numbers*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1910), 146.

life of Joshua evidenced that the [Holy] Spirit of God controlled his life.”¹⁰ Joshua’s ability was augmented by his own natural desire to serve God, but it would be folly to discredit the first-hand training and example he received from Moses for over 40 years. As a result Moses, being assured of Joshua’s leadership strengths and reliance on God, in accordance with the Lord’s command laid his hands on Joshua in front of the entire Israelite community, thus setting his protégé up to succeed him (v. 22-23).

Joshua’s Oversight

Joshua certainly was a powerful godly leader for the Israelites. After Moses died and Joshua took over, God spoke to him and directed him to boldly overcome the enemies in the Promised Land with a spirit of strength, knowing that God would provide (Josh. 1:2-9). He also reminded Joshua to keep the Mosaic Law (v. 8). He was not only charged to keep it though, but also to talk about it to the people and meditate on it himself.¹¹ It is clear even from the start of Joshua’s rule that the people respected him and his authority. He quickly mobilized the Israelite people to enter the Promised Land (v. 10-15) and the people heartily responded, pledging their allegiance and obedience (v. 16-18).

Joshua proved himself to be a capable leader. He showed foresight in spying out the land before the Israelites enter (Josh. 2). After that he took his first major step of faith as Israel’s leader by ordering the Israelites to cross over the Jordan River because of God’s command and promise to assist him (Josh. 3:7-8). After successfully crossing into

¹⁰ R. Dennis Cole, vol. 3B, *Numbers*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 469.

¹¹ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), Jos 1:7–8.

the Promised Land and ending the 40 years of wilderness wandering, Joshua showed that God was his priority by commanding the Israelites to first set up a 12 stone memorial which would act as a reminder to all generations of how God miraculously worked (Josh. 4). He also showed priority to God by requiring the Israelites to circumcise themselves in the new land and conducting their first Passover Feast in the new land (Josh. 5). The necessity of the circumcision would have been a somber reminder that the older rebellious generation had died out, replaced by a new one, thus fulfilling God's divine sentence.¹² From here Joshua began a military campaign which would span the majority of the book. From chapter 6-12 Joshua leads the Israelites in military victory, and deals with internal conflict when necessary (Josh. 7). Since by the end of chapter 12 Joshua has grown old and worn, God told him to cease his military campaign and divide the land to the Israelites, setting up cities of refuge and Levitical cities among the people (Josh. 13-21). Joshua uses his last days to rally the Israelites and exhort them to continue following God and their covenant with Him (Josh. 22-24).

The end of the book of Joshua concludes with a sobering verse: "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel" (Josh. 24:31). While this sounds like a positive end to Joshua's rule, it foreshadows the events of Judges. A similar verse occurs in Judges 2:7 and is followed by "and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel" (Judg. 2:10b). From this point there is a recurring theme in Judges of the people doing evil in the sight of the Lord until a godly judge would deliver them. It would be unfair to put all of

¹² David M. Howard, Jr., vol. 5, *Joshua*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 149.

the blame for this on Joshua. After all, the parents had been charged to teach their children the ways of God (Deut. 6:20). However, it is noticeable that Joshua has no one mentioned in whom he entrusts the leadership of Israel. Unlike his teacher, Moses, who mentored him throughout the wilderness wandering, Joshua does not appear to have prepared a strong man of God during the conquest of the Promised Land. Though the reason for his oversight is never covered in Scripture, it most likely indirectly triggered the Israel's fall into a cycle of disobedience, captivity, and deliverance.¹³

Elijah and Elisha

Elijah is one of the most well known prophets in the Bible. His name, which means “my God is the Lord,” foreshadowed the faithfulness he would show in his ministry as an Old Testament prophet. In the 9th century B.C. the northern kingdom of Israel reached its highest point economically since the split with the southern kingdom. King Ahab had just married the pagan woman Jezebel who brought Baal worship and idolatry into an already corrupted Israelite community.¹⁴ It is in this setting that Elijah came on the scene to confront Ahab and Jezebel and strive to turn them and the nation back to God. He displayed many miracles to show God's presence to the Israelites. For instance, he announced a 3-year drought, he raised a widow's dead son back to life, and he called fire from heaven to consume a sacrifice. Even his departure from Earth was miraculous, in that he was called up to heaven in a whirlwind without needing to die. Elijah did not depart from this world without leaving a powerful legacy, though.

¹³ John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, Paulus Cassel and P. H. Steenstra, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Judges* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 55.

¹⁴ Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 689.

Elijah had just won a mighty victory against his main antagonists, Ahab and Jezebel. He defeated them and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel through the awesome power of God. However, after this Jezebel was furious and pursued Elijah in order to take his life. While being pursued, Elijah, in a state of deepest, most bitter sorrow, gives into his depression and asks God to take his life (1 Kgs. 19:4).¹⁵ Up to this point Elijah was aggravated with people who only rejected and hunted him. After God granted what might be Elijah's greatest victory he fell into such a pitiful lowly state. However, God made Himself known to Elijah a total of three times and in the final time renewed his confidence in people. Elijah's human frailty did not disqualify him from being a person God would further use as a prophet and mentor. God ordered him to name a replacement for the king, a replacement for himself, and assured him that there were still 7,000 men who had not given into the idolatrous culture in Israel. Though Elijah did not see the end of his mission to end Baal worship, God assured him that through the three leaders God wanted Elijah to appoint, He would complete the purge of Baal cult that Elijah had started.¹⁶

In 1 Kings 19:19 Elijah found his God-appointed protégé, Elisha. Elijah saw his future student and throws his mantle on him. In their time this was a symbolic representation that Elijah had transferred his prophetic power from himself to Elisha. Elisha bids farewell to his parents, slaughters his oxen and burns his plow. This exemplified the separation he was making from his old life. It also shows that Elisha seemed to know he would need to take a single-minded approach to the difficult task he

¹⁵ John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, Karl Chr. W. F. Bähr et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 1 Kings* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 218.

¹⁶ Walvoord, *Bible Knowledge*, 529.

was assuming.¹⁷ Jesus may reference this event in the New Testament when He says, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). After this Elisha fades into the background, merely being present with Elijah though not mentioned again until he replaces Elijah in 2 Kings 2. He spends this time watching his mentor and growing under him.

In 2 Kings 2 both Elijah and Elisha were present. Elijah knew that God was about to call him away, and so he was preparing for that end. Curiously enough, though, there are three occasions when Elijah tried to dissuade Elisha from continuing with him to the place where God was going to call him away. Elijah was not trying to conceal his impending glorification from Elisha; on the contrary, he needed to make it known since Elisha was about to become his successor. Lange surmises that Elijah simply did not wish that his departure should be much spoken of or witnessed by anyone.¹⁸ Regardless, Elisha loyally stuck to his mentor until the end. His response of quieting all the prophets who continually told him that Elijah was about to be taken away indicates that Elisha was experiencing intense sorrow at the prospect of losing Elijah.¹⁹ In verse 9, directly before Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind, he asked Elisha what he could do for him before departing forever. Recognizing his mentor’s special relationship with God, Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah’s power. Since answering this request would be in God’s hands and thus Elijah was unsure as to whether or not this difficult request would be

¹⁷ Paul R. House, vol. 8, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 225.

¹⁸ Lange, *2 Kings*, 12.

¹⁹ House, *1, 2 Kings*, 257.

granted, he left the answer to be determined by God, saying that if Elisha saw him departing, his request would be granted.

This indeed happened, and after the fiery chariot which took Elijah up had departed, Elisha was once again left with his mentor's cloak (similar to their first meeting 1 Kgs. 19:19). The fiery departure was a sign to Elisha that his request was fulfilled. The mantle of the master was a sign to others that he was Elijah's divinely appointed successor.²⁰ Elisha indeed had a double portion of Elijah's spirit. He shows an immediate sign to the on-looking prophets by separating the Jordan River with Elijah's cloak (2 Kgs. 2:13-14). Next he travels to Jericho and miraculously solves an issue the inhabitants were having with unclean water by adding salt to it (2 Kgs. 2:19-22). These miracles continued to flow forth from Elisha as he proceeded to allow God to work in him as his mentor had done. Through his life Elisha even accomplished several of the things Elijah had left undone, such as the anointing of Jehu and Hazael, the final destruction of Ahab's house which Elijah predicted, and the further training of the schools of the prophets which Elijah founded.²¹ Even after his death and burial it is recorded that a corpse which was thrown into Elisha's grave was miraculously brought back to life (2 Kgs. 13:21). The legacy Elijah started was definitely continued through the working of Elisha.

Proverbs

Proverbs is a unique book of the Bible in that, due to its genre, it cannot be interpreted as definite promises for success if followed. To interpret Proverbs thus would

²⁰ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, vol. 3, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 210.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

be to violate the distinctive characteristics of the Proverbs genre. The method in which truth is conveyed in biblical proverbs is the same as with proverbs universally; they express important truths for practical living in ways that are memorable and thus repeatable. However, this is done by overstatement or catchy phrases that should not necessarily be analyzed for their precision. This literary embellishment is done to make a point, not deceive the reader. Fee likens this to the American phrase, “a penny saved is a penny earned.”²² While frugality is important, extracting the idea that money should never be spent is a faulty interpretation of this common phrase. Thus, while mentorship concepts can be extracted from Proverbs, they must be read in light of their genre.

First to be looked at is Proverbs 22:6: “Teach a youth about the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” The exact meaning of this verse is in dispute. Garrett offers a more contemporary interpretation, claiming that this verse is best understood as the idea to “[t]rain a child in a manner befitting a child.”²³ By this he means one should train a child using vocabulary, concepts, and illustrations a child can understand. However the most plain interpretation of this verse seems to be “to give elementary instruction,” in a moral sense, meaning that a child should be trained from an early age in the path of obedience to God.²⁴ In either sense, the idea of beginning mentorship at a young age is carried through here. Also, coming from Solomon, there seems to be the assumption that a child’s parent will fulfill this role. Thus, the necessity

²² Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 147.

²³ Duane A. Garrett, vol. 14, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 188.

²⁴ *Proverbs*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 422.

of parents as prime movers in their children's spiritual growth and development is seen as key here. In fact, parents have the main responsibility of raising their children. This is form, a crucial form, of mentorship.

Next to be looked at is Proverbs. 27:17: "Iron sharpens iron; and one man sharpens another." This verse is looking at more of a peer-to-peer relationship rather than a parent-to-child relationship, as was the case in the 22:6. This verse is not explicitly about mentorship, but does show that a positive relationship can be had between peers, which can translate to the subject of mentorship. The word for sharpens here is used figuratively to mean, "to make or cause a person to be keen in perception, quick witted, or full of energy."²⁵ It follows then that in any relationship where two people are working towards a goal of godliness, these people will have the effect of vitalizing one another. In mentorship this mutual sharpening is significant because it shows how not only the mentored person is benefitted, but the one who mentors as well.

The past two verses have explicit teaching on relationships that lead to godliness. However, the book of Proverbs is filled with verses that, if followed, would benefit any mentorship program. Since Proverbs was most likely written almost entirely by Solomon to mentor his own son (Acts. 1:8), though the word used for son (*ben*) is also able to be attributed to all young men.²⁶ Thus, Proverb's significance to offering ideas on mentorship cannot be overlooked. Many verses throughout the book deal with having effective interpersonal relationships. For instance, Proverbs 16:28 deals with the penalty for sowing strife and gossip while Proverbs 11:24-26 speaks to the need for generosity

²⁵ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Proverbs*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 580.

²⁶ Garrett, *Proverbs*, 69.

over acting in a miserly manner. These few verses hardly begin to penetrate the practical advice in Proverbs, and all of them can be applied indirectly to improve a mentorship relationship. This is because strong godly character makes the perfect soil for someone to both mentor and be mentored. For instance, selfless people show care to others necessary for a mentor while humble people show the teachable spirit necessary to learn from their mentor. The two verses discussed in detail are two of the most focused verses regarding mentorship though.

New Testament

Jesus and the Disciples

Mentorship vs. Discipleship

The first idea that must be clarified in a discussion of discipleship is that it is not the same as mentorship. As mentioned in the introductory material, it is a specific type of mentorship. Thus, all discipleship is a form of mentorship, but not all mentorship is discipleship. Mentoring is, at its core, helping a person make sense of his life.²⁷ In the spiritual realm mentoring helps a person make sense of his life *as he lives under God*.²⁸ In terms of discipleship, a popular, comprehensive definition which is often given is that “[d]iscipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have been won to Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth to maturity and equip them to

²⁷ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 214.

²⁸ Ibid.

reproduce themselves in a third spiritual generation.”²⁹ In its most basic sense, discipling someone is helping him be conformed to the image of Christ and live out God’s will for his life.

There are several purposes of discipleship. First and foremost, people should be involved in discipleship to emulate and help others emulate Christ (1 Pet. 2:21). This developing of person into the image of Christ is done by the combined effort of the Holy Spirit in a Christian and the believer working out his faith by doing God’s will. Second, discipleship should be done so that believers grow in their knowledge of God (John 17). Finally, discipleship should be done to bear much fruit for the Kingdom of God (John 15:8).³⁰ It is crucial, then, that Christians continue to disciple others. In fact, Dietrich Bonhoeffer—considered to be the greatest authority on discipleship in the 20th century—went as far to say “a Christianity without discipleship is always a Christianity without Jesus Christ.”³¹ In his view, engaging in discipleship is so intimately connected with being a Christian that the two cannot exist apart from one another.

Jesus’ Method of Discipleship

Jesus is the ultimate disciple-maker. Being the God-man, Jesus alone is the perfect model for Christians looking to likewise make disciples. Since people are not perfect, though, they will be fallible in their attempts at times, but inability to reach perfection should never stop a Christian from striving for it. The discipleship process that

²⁹ Found in the now out-of-print classic by Allen Hadidian, *Mentorship: Helping Other Christians Grow* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979).

³⁰ Jonathan A. Geukgeuzian, “Discipleship in Church Ministries,” unpublished class notes for CHMN 447 (Liberty University, Spring Semester, 2013).

³¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 59.

Jesus took His own 12 disciples through can be broken down into three phases to be more easily analyzed. First Jesus merely gathered followers. People traveled with Jesus and He taught them as they watched His example. Eventually, though, the disciples were brought to the point where they needed to make a decision to continue following Jesus or not. After that pivotal decision, Jesus began developing the disciples to do ministry on their own under His guidance. Finally, upon Christ's resurrection He initiated the third and final stage by commanding to the disciples to duplicate themselves. The name for each stage being discussed is adapted from Bill Hull's writing on disciple-making.³²

Stage 1 – Deliverance

Shortly after Jesus started His ministry on Earth He amassed a sizable following. People could not help but be drawn in by stories of His miraculous deeds and by the experience of His radical, godly personality. In a religious setting characterized by overly legalistic Pharisees on the one extreme and abundant pagan pluralism on the other, people saw a man with the true character of God Himself; and they liked it! While many people followed Jesus after finding Him, the Lord made a point to devote special time to 12 men of his own choosing: the ones who would become His disciples.

In John 1:35-51 Jesus gathered the first disciples who would eventually become the 12 Apostles. It should be noted that this is a different occurrence than the later instance with the disciples recorded in Mark 1:17. John described their conversion, whereas Mark described their call to service.³³ In the John passage Jesus quickly amassed men who would most likely make up five of His 12: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael,

³² Hull, *Discipleship*, 24.

³³ Arthur Walkington Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1923-45), 62-63.

and an unnamed disciple. Some of the men followed Jesus because of an endorsement He received from renowned prophet John the Baptist. Some caught on because of the excitement of other disciples. Yet another caught a glimpse of Jesus' divine nature and latched on. The wedding at Cana where Jesus performed His first miracle preceded this gathering of followers. If the disciples were not hooked before they would certainly have been after that. Aside from spiritual deliverance, Jesus even delivered the men who followed Him from a mundane life into an adventure of following after God which was filled with purpose and fulfillment.

Over their time with Jesus the disciples saw many miracles and learned about God, His holy standard, and His plan for humanity from the many sermons of Jesus. In addition to hearing Jesus' teaching as the rest of the crowds did, though, the disciples were privy to individual training and explanations regarding Christ's teaching. For instance after telling the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9), the disciples queried Jesus on the meaning of each element of His story. In Mark 4:11 Jesus responded by telling them He would reveal the secrets of the kingdom to them, though it would continue to be hidden in parables to the outsiders. The outsiders who are mentioned most likely refer to all unbelievers.³⁴ Thus, Jesus did not reveal His teaching to those who would not even acknowledge that He had come. While the disciples were privy to extra knowledge because of their proximity to Christ, their commitment to Him was still elementary. Jesus was working on the foundational aspect of discipleship—commitment to Christ—before He progressed to the next stage of their development. Commitment is a necessary element for any mentor relationship, and especially discipleship.

³⁴ James A. Brooks, vol. 23, *Mark*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 83.

Eventually the disciples were faced with solidifying their commitment to follow Jesus. After a controversial teaching on Jesus being the bread of life in John 6:22-59 where Jesus, apparently not concerned with public perception, stated that, “Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (John 6:54). At this statement many of the disciples turned back and stop following Jesus. He then turns to His 12 disciples and inquires what they will do. Recognizing Jesus’ foreknowledge regarding those who are his, it is unlikely he doubted their commitment. The question is more of a challenge than a question stemming from mental angst. The question is asked more for the disciples’ sake than Jesus’. The master disciple-maker was drawing out a confession of faith from His disciples.³⁵ Jesus’ question was honored by Peter’s affirmation of his commitment to Jesus: “Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69). The text assumes an agreement on the part of the other disciples following this.

Stage 2 – Development

After a period of watching and learning from Jesus, the Lord saw fit to send His disciples into the world on their own and allowed them to put into practice the things they had learned from Him. The most full account of Jesus sending his disciples out is detailed in Matthew 9:35-11:1. Verse 35 sets the scene, with Jesus doing amazing work teaching and preaching and healing. However, when looking at the crowds of people around Him, Jesus realized that the number of people who needed to hear about Him was disproportionate to the amount of time He had left in His earthly ministry. Of course God can do whatever He wants, but by taking on human flesh Jesus invited the limitations of

³⁵ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 303.

humanity (Phil. 2:6-8). Seeing the issue at hand, Jesus then summoned the disciples to extend His ministry reach. This commissioning highlights one of the needs for mentorship in Christianity. If not even Jesus Himself, the Son of God, could do all that needed to be done then neither can normal human beings. As a result, training disciples is a necessary task in order to fulfill the Great Commission.

Jesus did not send out His disciples haphazardly. Instead, He began the work of properly developing them so that they would be able to overcome the obstacles which faced them. First, Jesus bestowed on His men authority over unclean spirits. From the parallel passage in Luke 9:1 Jesus gave them power *and* authority, both qualifying and authorizing them.³⁶ After this, Jesus gave the 12 disciples thorough instructions (Matt. 10). Jesus focused them by giving them a specific target (the Israelites [v. 6]). He gave them a mission, namely to announce the coming kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, and perform exorcisms (v. 7-8). He also gave travel specifications, namely to pack lightly and with few provisions (v. 9-10). This was probably so that the disciples would not profit commercially from their powers, but also that they would trust in God for their needs.³⁷ In verses 10-15 Jesus explained how to go about sharing the message and how to respond if rejected. For the majority of the rest of the chapter (v. 16-39) Jesus gave a solemn explanation of persecution, particularly that the disciples should expect it if doing their job properly. This grave section foreshadows the increasingly hostile responses

³⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), Mt 10:1.

³⁷ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 417.

Jesus and the disciples were going to receive.³⁸ Finally Jesus ended His instructions with a positive note. Though there was threat of persecution, the reward for accomplishing their task would be that the disciples would be partakers of God's great divine purpose. This is to say that any honor paid to the disciples would naturally overflow to Jesus and the Father.³⁹ This goal of bringing honor to God should still be every Christian's highest calling.

The instruction Jesus gave was crucial, but one of the most important aspects of this stage was Jesus' continued oversight of the disciples' actions. For the rest of the Gospel the disciples continue to appear with Jesus as He teaches others. Apparently they did not split off from Him for good. Thus, this stage did not eliminate the teaching aspect in the former one, but overlapped it instead. A circumstance where Christ's continued presence came into play heavily is in Mark 9:14-28. The disciples, commissioned to heal the sick, apparently found a case that they are unable to fix. A spirit-possessed boy with seizure-like symptoms was afflicted, and despite the disciples' best efforts, they were unable to remedy the situation. Thankfully, Jesus was still around to help His disciples out of the bind they found themselves in. Jesus healed the boy, diffusing the situation. Afterwards, His disciples questioned Him as to why their efforts were ineffective. In Mark Jesus is quoted saying that only prayer could drive the spirit out. In the parallel passage in Matthew 17, the author adds that Jesus cited the disciples' faithlessness as a contributing reason to their ineffectiveness. While interpretations of Jesus' meaning can

³⁸ Craig Blomberg, vol. 22, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 165.

³⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 269.

vary, what is clear is that by making Himself available to His disciples Jesus continued to teach them and facilitate their growth.

Stage 3 – Deployment

The final stage of Jesus' discipleship process was deploying the disciples to multiplying His witness. The final stage of any discipleship relationship is deploying a trained disciple to reproduce himself in a third spiritual generation. Jesus took His disciples to this stage after His resurrection. There are actually five accounts of Jesus commissioning the disciples to further make disciples of others (Matt. 20:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8); however the most prominent one is certainly the Matthew account. Here Jesus delivered their mission to further make disciples. He also expanded their range, which up until then had been primarily the Jews, to encompassing all nations. Third, He outlined a few specific jobs for them. They needed to baptize and teach their disciples. While this was a specific command to those 11 disciples (Judas had killed himself), the fact that the Christians in Acts also latched on to the disciple-making mandate means that there is a precedent for other Christians to accomplish Jesus' commission, and thus it is most probable that Christians today should do likewise.

As a final statement, Jesus promised His presence to the disciples. While this was surely a comforting statement, the teacher-disciple relationship held by Jesus and the 11 would certainly be drastically different as the disciples began their own ministries apart from Jesus' human presence. The final stage is a necessary step of separation so that the disciple has room to grow and flourish on his own feet. However, as Jesus' closing comment clarifies, the bond of the teacher is never completely severed from his disciple.

Mentorship and Acts

The book of Acts is a treasure in the biblical canon in that it gives a framework into which the entire New Testament after the Gospels can fit. Acts chronicles the start of the Church from Jesus' ascension to the Roman arrest of the Apostle Paul in Rome (mid AD 60). While Acts fills in an accurate history of the Church's founding, it is selective in its disclosure of information. This is to say that often the reader is left wondering what happens to person A, or where person B ends up, or what becomes of church C. However, for this reason information on the disciples' method of training all nations to be disciples is by no means comprehensive. This being said, there is still a great deal that can be gleaned from a study of what Acts *does* have to say about the Apostles' mentorship methods. The two best examples of mentors in Acts are Barnabas and Paul. Since Paul and his mentorship methods will be discussed in the next section on the Pastoral Epistles, here the focus will be on how Barnabas accomplished mentorship in Acts.

The Acts Mentor: Barnabas

Barnabas was a Levite formerly named Joseph who first entered the picture in Acts 4:36-37. Here Barnabas is identified as being called by the Apostles the "Son of Encouragement." Though viewed as an encourager, Barnabas' main role in Acts is that of a mediator.⁴⁰ He is also portrayed as generous, selling off his own land and giving the money to the Apostles for ministry use. Following a section which describes the whole

⁴⁰ D. France, "Barnabas-Son of Encouragement," *Themelios* 4 (1978): 3-6.

community of believers doing this sort of work, it is probable that Barnabas received a specific mention because he was exceptionally generous in his giving.

Barnabas and Paul

The next time Barnabas is mentioned is in Acts 9:27. The Apostle Paul had received salvation on the road to Damascus, and then spent three years in training and seclusion in Arabia (Gal. 1:17). After this, Paul traveled to Jerusalem to meet the Apostle Peter and stay with him. However, because of his former life as a persecutor of Christians, the believers in Jerusalem were afraid of him and avoided him. It was at this point when Barnabas appeared and vouched for both Paul and his testimony. Barnabas' action opened the door for Paul to have fellowship with the Jerusalem believers, an opportunity he would have never had if Barnabas had not taken a chance by standing up for him. Whether Barnabas had heard about Paul's conversion testimony through some of his fellow Christian friends who had come from Damascus⁴¹ or he merely took time to listen to Paul, the fact is that by trusting him Barnabas helped establish Paul with the Apostles. In doing this, Barnabas gave recognition and support to Paul, which are two key functions of a mentor. Paul indeed proved himself to be faithful to the Gospel message, but due to his impetuous nature he angered the Jews who, remembering him once to be an ally, made an attempt on his life (Acts 9:29). To preserve him, the Christians in Jerusalem sent Paul back to his hometown of Tarsus where he stayed for many years. There is no record of his serving any further while in Tarsus, however this does not rule out that he was still involved in ministry during this period. Regardless, it

⁴¹ John B. Polhill, vol. 26, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 243.

was vital for Paul to be removed from the limelight so that he would be preserved for a period in which the need for him would be greater.

Mentorship in Antioch

Barnabas does not surface again until Acts 11:22. Persecution after Stephen's martyrdom pushed missionaries out of Jerusalem into all the surrounding regions. Because of this, churches began to crop up in cities other than Jerusalem. Barnabas most likely proved himself faithful while in Jerusalem, because when the church in Antioch started expanding beyond its leaders' ability to maintain it, the Apostles sent him to assist. Barnabas acted faithfully in Antioch and the church there continued to expand, however it eventually reached the point where Barnabas was unable to keep up with the growth himself. Fortunately, Barnabas was aware of a fiery evangelist laying dormant only a short trip away in Tarsus; this would only be an 80-mile journey over land or about a 12-hour sail.⁴²

In the early period Barnabas alone seemed to have discerned in Paul the unique personality and skill set with which he would afterwards surpass all others in zeal for ministry and resulting success.⁴³ It is impossible to say what Paul would have become without Barnabas' mentorship, but in light of God's sovereignty it is safe to determine that God providentially placed Barnabas in a tutoring role during Paul's highly developmental years of Christian ministry so that Paul would become the man he was. Having another chance to demonstrate his dedication to the cause of Christ, and under the tutelage of

⁴² *Acts of the Apostles Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 359.

⁴³ Jamieson, *Commentary Critical*, Ac 11:25.

Barnabas, Paul and the church in Antioch flourished. Paul and Barnabas worked in Antioch together for one year and as a testimony to the effectiveness of the church there, Antioch is where the title *Christian* was first used. This shows both that the church was being effective in reaching Gentiles (as it is a Gentile designation)⁴⁴ and that the Church was beginning a unique identity, ceasing to be viewed as a sect of Judaism.⁴⁵

Surpassing the Mentor

Eventually the Holy Spirit called the church at Antioch to set apart Paul and Barnabas for the ministry God had prepared for them. The prophets and teachers in the church laid their hands on the dynamic duo and sent them off on what would become Paul's first missionary journey. This must have been an unparalleled opportunity for Paul who was able to exercise his commitment to evangelism alongside his mentor and the one man who showed confidence in him when no one else would. From Acts 13 to the end of Acts 15 Paul and Barnabas are inseparable in their ministry exploits.

In Acts 13-14 the two are on their first missionary journey together. Though Barnabas apparently showed some hypocrisy and discrimination towards Gentile believers at a time when Peter came to Antioch (mentioned in Gal. 2:13), it is apparent that Barnabas overcame his insipient racism by the time of the First Missionary Journey. This is evident because their missionary efforts resulted in the formation of a chain of predominantly Gentile churches far into Asia Minor in the face of surging Jewish

⁴⁴ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ac 11:26.

⁴⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, 273.

opposition.⁴⁶ Also of significance at the start of the First Missionary Journey is the order which Luke uses to refer to the missionary partners. Previously they had always been referred to as *Barnabas and Paul*, but thereafter he uses *Paul and Barnabas*. There is one exception in Acts 14:14, but this is probably due to the order in which Barnabas and Paul are thought to be Greek gods. The reason for this change in ordering is most likely to signify that Paul was stepping out from the position of being Barnabas's protégé, and stepping into being a leader in his own right.⁴⁷ And step in he did. Throughout the First Missionary Journey Paul seems to have taken the dominant role as spokesman while Barnabas moved into a more supportive role based on how each is portrayed throughout the rest of Acts.

Partners in Conflict

In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem to offer their insight in a growing doctrinal conflict. Men from Judea, most likely Judaizers, had been falsely teaching that the Gentile believers needed to be circumcised to receive salvation. Unable to resolve the issue through heated debate, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem in order to resolve the issue with the elders there. This became what is called the Jerusalem Council. Rather than getting a quick answer, issues arose when the Pharisees in Jerusalem sided with the Judaizers in affirming that circumcision is a prerequisite for salvation (Acts 15:5). It is likely that these Pharisees who objected were still Christian.

⁴⁶ A. F. Walls, "Barnabas" In , in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard et al., 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 123.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Though not distinguished as Christians, in the early church Christianity was seen as a fulfillment of Judaism and thus still a Jewish religion.⁴⁸

Peter made the initial stand for salvation by faith alone for the Gentiles. This was followed by Paul and Barnabas's testimony of the incredible work God did among the Gentiles on the missionary journey (v. 12). It seems unusual that Paul makes no defense of his doctrinal stance besides relaying what God was doing, especially when one considers his often-boisterous personality. However, this was probably strategically prompted by Barnabas and the other leaders in order to add credibility to the council meeting. Instead, Peter and James—both prominent elders—delivered the main arguments in the meeting. A third party can address an issue with less ardor and more authority, whereas those who are in the middle of an issue often will be dismissed by their opponents.⁴⁹ The council ended triumphantly in an affirmation of salvation through faith and not works. The Apostles sent their response with Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch, and included Barsabbas and Silas as cohorts with Paul and Barnabas in order, again, to give a non-biased recollection of the events and final decision of the Jerusalem Council to the Christians in Antioch.

Breaking of the Fellowship

The men sent with Paul and Barnabas to testify in Antioch were both “leading men among the brothers” (Acts 15:22). Silas in particular seemed to catch Paul's eye. When Paul and Barnabas decided to retrace their steps from the First Missionary Journey

⁴⁸ Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 291.

⁴⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, 328.

in order to encourage the churches they planted, a heated argument arose. The issue was over whom to bring with them on the Second Missionary Journey: John Mark or Silas.

Mark had a previous history with the two missionaries. He accompanied them as a traveling companion during the First Missionary Journey, but shortly left them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13) leaving Barnabas and Paul to continue alone.

Barnabas, always a man of second chances, wanted to give his cousin Mark another try. However, Paul apparently regarded Mark's action as an act of desertion, and thus refused to travel with him again, opting for Silas instead.⁵⁰

Unable to resolve their dispute, these two faithful companions mutually decided to part ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus while Paul traveled with Silas northwest. For the first time in years Paul embarked on a grand adventure without his mentor and long-time friend, Barnabas. Since Luke's narrative follows Paul from this point, Barnabas is all but lost to obscurity after the two depart from each other's company. Unfortunately, a mentor's relationship with his protégé is not always free of conflict nor will the relationship always terminate on positive terms. There is one glimpse of hope that Paul and Barnabas eventually do make amends, however, in the form of a friendly mention of him in 1 Corinthians 9:6 which indicates that the estrangement between them had passed away.⁵¹

⁵⁰ R. A. Cole, "Mark (John)" In , in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard et al., 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 731.

⁵¹ *Acts of the Apostles Vol. II*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 6.

Pastoral Epistles

1 Timothy

The account we have of Paul's mentorship toward Timothy is from Paul's own perspective in the form of his directional letter to Timothy. The two letters to Timothy are instructional, but even more notable they are intimate and caring. These two aspects of the letters are often inseparably linked throughout both epistles in a way that can only be understood by recognizing Paul and Timothy's past history.

Timothy was most likely one of Paul's converts. This fact can be inferred from the address: "To Timothy, *my true son in the faith*" (1 Tim. 1:2a). Timothy's conversion most likely happened during Paul's first missionary journey. After their escape from Iconium in Acts 14:5-7, Paul and Barnabas went to the nearby city of Lystra (25 miles south-west of Iconium) to continue spreading the Gospel. Though initially unsuccessful in their attempts to evangelize because the people of Iconium mistook them for Greek gods, several people did eventually receive salvation. One of these converts was probably Timothy.⁵² However, non-Christian Jews from Antioch and Iconium followed Paul to Lystra and stirred up the people against him, ultimately having him beaten almost to death and thrown out of the city (Acts 14:19-20).

However, Paul and Barnabas were sure to return to Lystra in order to strengthen the disciples while on their return trip at the end of the First Missionary Journey. At the start of the Second Missionary Journey Paul picked up Timothy as his protégé (Acts 16:1-5) and from then on he took it upon himself to personally mentor young Timothy by

⁵² Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, vol. 34, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 51.

taking him on the travels and showing him first-hand how to do ministry. From then on Timothy served as Paul's aide, fellow church planter, representative to other churches, and companion.⁵³ Paul came to trust Timothy enough that he left him behind at the church in Ephesus in order to deal with certain problems in the church in the great apostle's stead.⁵⁴ This is where Timothy was stationed at the writing of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

Specifically in the first letter to Timothy we see Paul mentoring his student by offering instruction in the administrative, practical, and spiritual realm. In the administrative realm, Paul aided Timothy in finding the next leaders to take over after him. This was done by giving qualifications for Timothy to look for in potential elders and deacons. This is significant for any leader to do, but especially in the case of the church at Ephesus where bad leaders abounded. The false teachers who wandered from the truth and led others astray with them needed to be replaced with men of integrity who would lead the church in its mission to take the Gospel to the world.⁵⁵ Thus, Paul required that Timothy follow a qualification list that would ensure him to find men who exhibited godly discipline (1 Tim. 3:1-13). This was vital then and is still today. MacArthur claims that "the one snare that has probably caused the downfall of more

⁵³ Wayne A. Brindle, *The Pastoral Epistles: Notes and Outlines* (Ann Arbor, MI: XanEdu Publishing, 1996), 5.

⁵⁴ Knute Larson, vol. 9, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 139.

⁵⁵ Simon J. Robinson, *Opening Up 1 Timothy*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 53.

leaders than any other hazard [is] a lack of personal discipline.”⁵⁶ Paul showed that giving instruction is a necessary part of effective mentorship.

Paul also gave incredibly practical advice to young Timothy throughout the first epistle in the form of interpersonal coaching. He did this by imparting pointers to Timothy in how to deal with certain age and gender groups in the church: old and young men, old and young women, slaves, widows, and fellow leaders (1 Tim. 5:1-6:2). Since leadership is largely people-work, this advice to an aspiring leader would be invaluable. As an overarching principle to Timothy, Paul demanded that, despite Timothy’s youthfulness, he would set an example for the other believers by the way he conducted himself (1 Tim. 3:12-16). If Timothy did this and honored the people at Ephesus, he would surely be successful in his leadership role. It is significant that Paul seems to give tips and advice more so than actual commandments with attached consequences. This shows the necessity of a mentor trusting his mentee and allowing him room and freedom to develop on his own merit.

Lastly, Paul imparted spiritual guidance to Timothy in his first letter to him. Since false teaching abounded in Ephesus, Paul reaffirmed the true Gospel message and exhorted Timothy to hold fast to it (1 Tim. 1:3-11). He also reminded Timothy of the importance of an effective prayer ministry for his constituents. In doing this, Paul encouraged Timothy to offer up petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings for the people of Ephesus (1 Tim. 2:1).

⁵⁶ John MacArthur, *Called to Lead: 26 Leadership Lessons from the Life of the Apostle Paul* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 145.

2 Timothy

The book of 2 Timothy is the last canonical epistle Paul ever wrote. The importance to which Paul held his role of mentorship is seen in the fact that at the end of his life Paul was most concerned about Timothy. The tone of 2 Timothy differs from that of 1 Timothy in that, rather than imparting a great deal of instruction, Paul was more concerned with encouraging Timothy to continue the ministry and to follow Paul's example.

Paul was definitely focused on getting Timothy charged up for the work ahead of him. Reminding Timothy of the spiritual heritage of faith he had in his family, Eunice and Lois, as well as Paul himself is the first thing Paul does (2 Tim. 1:5). This is followed up by the command to stir up the spiritual gifts which Timothy possessed, remembering the strength he had in God (2 Tim. 1:6-7). The word for stir up is $\square\nu\alpha\zeta\omega\pi\upsilon\rho\epsilon\square\nu$ which comes from two root words meaning *kindle* ($\zeta\omega\pi\upsilon\rho\epsilon\omega$) and *again* ($\square\nu\alpha$). This does not indicate that Timothy's zeal had grown cold,⁵⁷ but rather that he should "fan into flame" (as the NIV puts it) or make full use of his special gift from God.⁵⁸ This was meant to affirm Timothy in his ability to preach the Gospel and to encourage him to hold to his sound faith (2 Tim. 1:8-18). Not only did Paul think Timothy was able to preach the Gospel, but the apostle went one step further and commanded him to continue doing so (2 Tim. 4:1-2). This was Paul's final charge to the young pastor, Timothy. He was at that point placing the responsibility for the care of all the churches and leadership upon

⁵⁷ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 2 Ti 1:6.

⁵⁸ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 370.

Timothy's shoulders.⁵⁹ However, this is not a concession Paul was making. Instead, Paul was giving Timothy a full-fledged bid of confidence; this is something every student strives to receive from his mentor.

As a means of spurring on Timothy's ministry, Paul took a moment to share with his protégé his own life's example. This was not done out of a haughty spirit, but out of a desire to mentor his student through a real life illustration. Paul did this in two ways. First, he shared about the persecutions he had endured throughout the course of his time in ministry. This is interspersed throughout 2 Timothy but is most focused in chapter 3. Some of this persecution Timothy would have witnessed personally. However, the reality of persecution was not meant to discourage Timothy, but seeing how God preserved Paul through it would prepare and propel him to likewise endure persecution for the sake of the Gospel. Second, Paul shared the successful summary of his life's ministry endeavors. He had fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). Seeing his mentor finish strong would undoubtedly have been a guiding light to Timothy throughout the trials that would present themselves to him throughout his own race.

Titus

As with Timothy, the address to Titus indicates that he was most likely a convert of Paul's: "To Titus, *a true son* in our common faith" (Tit. 1:4). Though Acts does not mention Titus, he was quite involved in Paul's missionary activities as shown in the Pauline letters.⁶⁰ Galatians 2:1&3 shows that Titus was both known by the Galatian

⁵⁹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2 Ti 4:1.

⁶⁰ *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1601.

church and he also accompanied Paul on a trip to Jerusalem, most likely the Jerusalem Council. In addition, he was the one who Paul used to deliver 2 Corinthians to the backslidden church (2 Cor. 8:16-23). Lastly, according to 2 Timothy 4:10, Titus was also sent once to Dalmatia.

It is evident that at the time of Paul's writing Titus had been left in charge of the church in Crete. Paul put Titus in charge of setting the Cretan churches in order (Tit. 1:5a). Titus apparently had a natural boldness and drive which Timothy lacked. Because of his inborn leadership characteristics, while there are administrative and encouraging aspects to the book of Titus, the core purpose of Titus is not administrative or encouragement but a warning. The Cretan church had fallen prey to a form of Jewish/Greek heresy.⁶¹

Aside from warning Titus about heresy, though, there are things that we can learn about Paul's mentorship of Titus through his letter. Paul seems to take a more hands-off approach to Titus' personal growth than he does Timothy. This should not be misunderstood as a lack of care, but a difference of personality between the two. Rather than giving Titus a sum of advice on who he needed to strive to be, Paul merely requested that Titus remember the basics Paul had already instructed him in (Tit. 1:5b). The rest of Paul's instruction seems to focus on how to disciple others in the church. Rather than picking mature leaders like Timothy was charged to do, Paul encouraged Titus to train the people himself (Tit. 2:1-10; 3:1-2). This confidence from Paul showed that at the time of writing, Titus was at a further stage in the mentorship process than Timothy because

⁶¹ Robert James Utley, vol. Volume 9, *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 92.

Titus was ready to begin developing other leaders. Recognizing this, Paul wrote to equip Titus for the work.

BIBLICAL METHODS AND PRINCIPLES ON MENTORSHIP

Methods and Principles Discovered

From the Moses-Joshua narrative one finds that Moses made an intentional effort to select a person to follow him. He also made his decision known to all the Israelite people through the laying on of his hands. This alleviated confusion and power struggle when Joshua did move in to take Moses' place after his death. This training of a person to take one's place is a vital aspect of mentorship. Also, by the time Joshua began leading Israel he was already quite a capable leader because Moses had been training him and showing him proper leadership principles throughout their life together. Instances where Moses allowed Joshua to have first-hand experience include helping at Mt. Sinai, leading the Israelites in battle, and spying out the wilderness. In addition, because Joshua was Moses' assistant, there must have been several other occasions where Moses invested in Joshua from practical standpoints which never got recorded in Scripture, not being important to the overall biblical narrative. Moses was directly involved in his approach to training Joshua, and he focused his main leadership development efforts into this one man. In picking his protégé, Moses decided on a man of impeccable character, moral fiber, and spiritual vigor.

Joshua demonstrated that he was a capable leader of the Israelite people. He boldly brought them into the Promised Land and ran a military campaign to purge the area of ungodly nations. He faithfully followed God and handled issues that came up with

firm responses. While an effective leader in his own right, Joshua's major failing is in the fact that he never trained and chose a leader to follow him as Moses did. As a result, after Joshua and the ruling body whose administration overlapped Joshua's life had died, the Israelites quickly turned from God. While the blame for this rests on every individual Israelite, the lack of leadership cannot be ignored as a substantial contributing reason for the nation of Israel's moral failure.

From the narrative in Kings about Elijah and Elisha there is an important model established for finding a trainee who a mentor believes is called to be his protégé. Though this is not always the case, nor is it even the normal series of events in mentorship, teachers should be alert to the people God brings into their lives in order to determine if there is a specific person a teacher should train. The positive impact a follower can have on his mentor's legacy is also exemplified here. When Elijah was called to heaven, he left several of his tasks on earth undone. However, through the work of Elisha, the goals Elijah had set out to accomplish were fulfilled. There is a temptation to focus on the human viewpoint in these accomplishments rather than the divine viewpoint, trying to accomplish a person's goals rather than God's will. Keeping this in mind, if emphasis in continuing a legacy is put on God's plan rather than a mentor's, this issue should be eliminated. Also, a common excuse that is given for not being a mentor to someone is that the person feels inadequate to mentor somebody else. It is important to note that aside from Jesus, all the mentors in the Bible were sinful humans who experience their own short fallings. As Elijah did not allow his struggle with depression after the events at Mt. Carmel to disqualify him from mentoring Elisha, so too should modern mentors not

allow issues that were properly dealt with in the past to discourage them from serving God in the present.

Proverbs is full of snippets of wisdom dealing with interpersonal relationships. All of these can bear on an effective mentorship relationship. Of the two verses specifically looked at, though, Proverbs 22:6 shows the importance of the parent-child relationship as a primary means of mentorship. In fact, the whole book of Proverbs is a testament to how much emphasis Solomon put on mentoring his children. Proverbs 27:17 shows the mutual benefit for interpersonal relationships. Thus, not only is the learner benefitted in a mentorship relationship, but so too is the mentor.

From the perfect mentor and disciple-maker, Jesus Christ, there are several methods to be noticed. First, Jesus seems to have developed His disciples through stages, treating them with different levels of reliance and responsibility through the stages. After calling His disciples, Jesus took a period when He mostly taught them. He performed miracles and preached sermons while they watched and listened attentively. He made sure to explain some of His more confusing teachings to them in a closer setting later on. Also, before moving the disciples on to the next stage of mentorship, Jesus acquired a profession of commitment from the disciples. In the second stage of the process Jesus released His disciples on the region, allowing them to do as they had seen Him do. He gives them guidance in the beginning and throughout this stage He assists them when they do not know how to proceed. Finally, Jesus charges the disciples to begin the process with other men, thus multiplying the early Church. Jesus promised His spiritual presence with the disciples through the Holy Spirit, but this last stage exhibited His most hands-off approach. The situation with Jesus, the perfect disciple-maker, and Judas, the

traitorous disciple, also offers consolation that an unsuccessful mentorship situation may occur, but it is not necessarily the fault of the teacher.

In the relationship of Barnabas and Paul there are methods to be extrapolated which traverse the entire mentorship process, even extending to the point where the student exceeds the teacher. First, though, Barnabas ministered to Paul by showing confidence in him when no one else wanted to risk it: confidence in both his abilities *and* character. The next they met, Barnabas backed up his words of confidence by seeking out Paul to help in an important church plant endeavor. This allowed Paul to grow through hands on work in ministry. Next Barnabas and Paul are seen entering the unknown together as they began the First Missionary Journey. At this point Paul had gained a lot of experience and Barnabas seemed content to step back and watch his student flourish. As a result, Paul became the primary speaker in most of the circumstances after that. The severance of these two men's companionship at the end of Acts is a disheartening occurrence, but shows a possible reality in any mentorship relationship. The passage in 1 Corinthians does offer hope that, with space and time, the two were able to make amends relationally. Bock points out that when a dispute arises, as was the case with Paul and Barnabas, sometimes the best solution *is* to recognize a need for distinct ministries and part ways for the sake of the advancement of the Gospel.⁶²

In the Pastoral Epistles there is a good example of what mentorship looks like from a technical standpoint. Paul showed diligence in his mentorship of Timothy and Titus by writing the epistles to coach them. He offered both of them administrative, interpersonal, spiritual, and practical advice. He did this, not in a broad sense, but in the

⁶² Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 520.

much-needed context of their present situation. He also used a different approach between how he mentored Timothy as opposed to how he mentored Titus. This is to say that his mentorship was personalized to the student so that it could be more effective.

Application of Methods and Principles

Descriptive vs. Prescriptive

The terms descriptive and prescriptive are crucial to understand when it comes to biblical hermeneutics. A descriptive text merely describes or seeks to describe. Applied to the Bible, this indicates that the things written therein were written because they describe a true historical event or conversation. All biblical portions are at least descriptive because they all describe true historical situations. A prescriptive text imposes a rule or method to be followed. Applied to the Bible, this indicates that the things written therein are not only describing historical events or conversations as they happened, but also that Christians reading them are duty-bound to imitate the examples in modern day. There are merits to both following the biblical model and using relevant modern techniques as long as the eternal principles in the Bible are not compromised. Though 1-on-1 mentorship is a proven method of training the next generation of Christians and Christian leaders, it should not be viewed as a sin to experiment with alternate mentorship techniques.

Negative Application

Negative applications should be not be emulated in a modern mentorship situation. There are two primary examples from the Bible that should be learned from and not repeated. The first is Joshua's failure to train and name a leader to take over after

him. Hans Finzel highlights the importance of this when he writes, “a leader who fails to identify and develop his successor stalls the future effectiveness of the organization and hinders the fulfillment of its purposes.”⁶³ Also, Barnabas’ insistence on his ministry decision, though a valid decision, led to a heated dispute and an apparently unfriendly parting. The idea to part ways may at times be beneficial, but it should be done prior to argument and severance of a formerly positive relationship.

Positive Application

Frequently leaders in the Bible are seen hand-picking the people they will mentor, with an eye kept on eventually allowing themselves to be replaced by their students. Sometimes, as in the case of Moses and Joshua and Titus and Paul, a student is picked who displays exemplary character and skill. Other times, as in the case of the disciples and Timothy, a student is picked in whom the teacher notes a potential for great spiritual vigor. While one approach takes more work than the other, both are good and acceptable. Regardless of the starting point of the student, personal interaction and instruction on the part of the teacher is a factor in every effective mentorship relationship in the Bible.

While parents should disciple their children, this does not nullify the need for non-family mentorship relationships such as apprenticeships, internships, and teacher-student relationships to name a few. Also, though mentorship is often thought of in terms of a teacher pouring into a student, it should be noted that both people will benefit from the tight-knit interaction they have with each other. Thus, a teacher should look for what he can learn from his student just as much as a student should try to learn from his

⁶³ Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, 2007), 193.

teacher. Failure on the part of the student is also at times unavoidable. This is not always a direct reflection on the ability or dedication of the mentor.

A mentored person should be viewed as means to continue a good work which God is doing after the mentor moves on. If intentional effort is made to impart a strong vision and mission emphasis in the mind of a student, it is likely that he will carry on the work of his teacher and could even surpass the scope of the work the teacher did. However, in doing this teacher must not lose sight of the fact that God is in control and He could call the learner into a different line of ministry work. The reality of God's sovereignty does not abate the necessity of sharing ministry vision, dreams, and goals with a person who one is preparing to replace himself with though.

Effectiveness in mentorship can be greatly increased by implementing stages of development. From the first day a disciple may be scared away by the thought of multiplying himself someday, but that is a goal to build towards. J. Oswald Sanders reinforces this idea by advising, "[t]raining new leaders is a delicate task. The wise trainer will not advertise the end he has in view."⁶⁴ In order to work towards the end of having a multiplying disciple, a useful model that could be implemented is first instructing, and then overseeing as the disciple does ministry, and finally releasing him to be autonomous. In order to avoid tension from growing pains, as in the case with Barnabas and Paul, distance should be given at an appropriate time so that the mentored person will have room to spread his wings.

Last, the idea that every person is different needs to be kept in mind, and strategies for mentorship should be catered accordingly. In a social study about the

⁶⁴ J. Oswald. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2007), 150.

importance of knowing a learner's strength, heart, attitude, personality, and experience (S.H.A.P.E), Dr. Kevin Leman asserts that it is key to put a disciple in the position that is suited to his or her S.H.A.P.E.⁶⁵ Besides merely fine-tuning the job a particular disciple will have, the approach to teaching him should reflect who he is as well. The letters to Timothy and Titus reinforce that different levels of independence and guidance are required for different people.

FINAL REMARKS

Mentorship is a difficult endeavor to embark on, but it is vital to the continued life of the Church. As a direct command from the Lord Jesus Christ to the Church (Matt. 28:19), mentorship should be taken seriously. The Bible offers many methods and principles to learn from, but freedom is also given to the mentor as to how to effectively develop his student and mold him into the image of Christ. Regardless of *how* it is done, the fact remains that it *must* be done. If a mindset of mentorship does not abound with Christians, the Church will cease to exist in a single generation. With this grave reality in mind, the words of Finzel are ever fitting that, “[f]rom our very first day on the job, we need to keep in mind that day in the future when, with humility, we will pass the torch to our successor. How we pass that torch might just be the ultimate measure of our leadership success.”⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Dr. Kevin Leman and William Pentak, *The Way of the Shepherd: 7 Ancient Secrets to Managing Productive People*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004), 37.

⁶⁶ Finzel, *Mistakes*, 198.

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