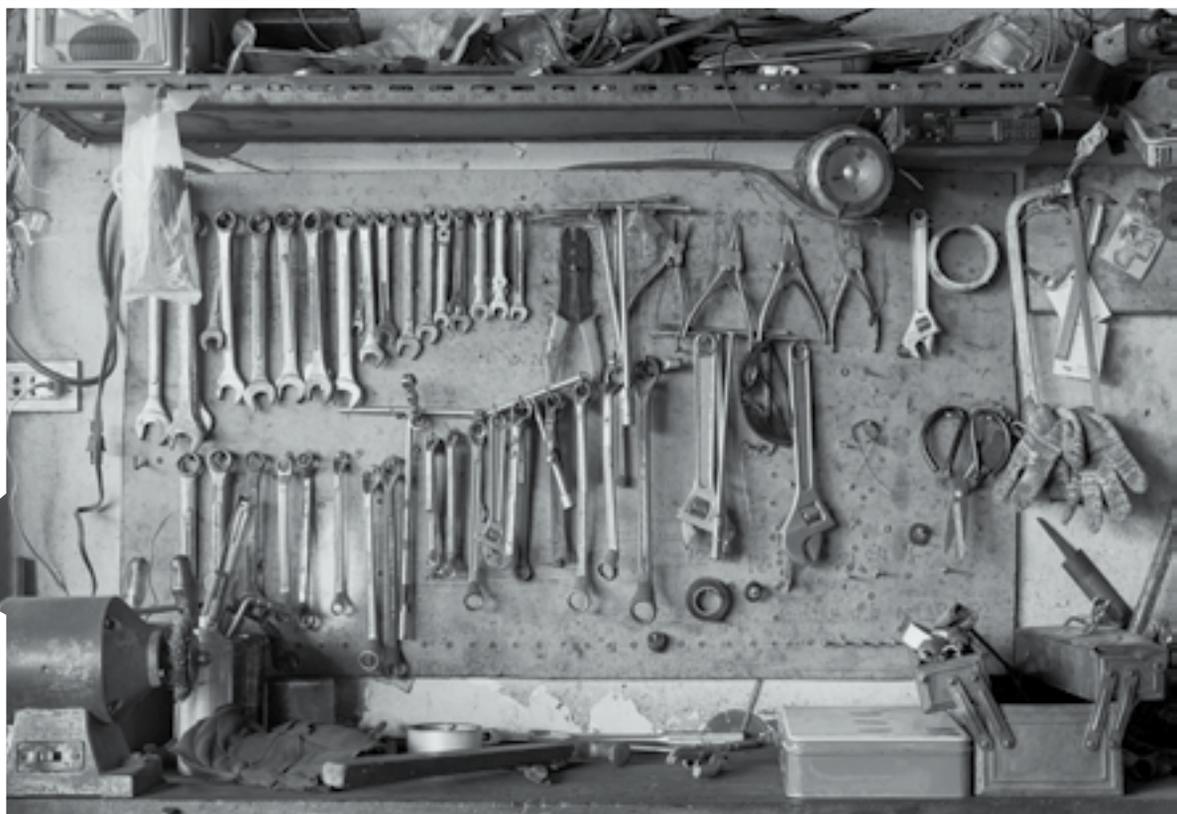


MENTORING: HOW TO EQUIP AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS



Everybody needs a mentor?

“Mentoring” is a buzzword these days. The business world loves the term, but what does mentoring mean in the church?

Mentoring is one believer intentionally investing in another believer to help him or her become more like Christ. It’s discipleship the way Jesus and Paul did it.

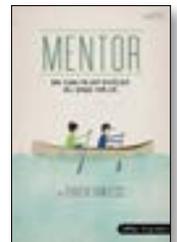
Jesus and Paul made disciples through mentoring. They prayerfully watched for potential mentees, initiated relationships with them, trained them, corrected them as needed, and then released them to do ministry themselves. They modeled for us what we need to be doing today, especially when we remember how others have helped us grow.

This study focuses on the mentoring relationship between Paul and Timothy. It’s only an introduction to the topic, but you’ll get enough to start mentoring. Someone probably helped you in your walk with Christ; now you can do the same.



Chuck Lawless

Chuck is dean of doctoral studies at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He also serves as team leader for Theological Education Strategists for the International Mission Board. He and his wife, Pam, started mentoring students more than twenty years ago. He is the author of a more detailed study on the subject of mentoring: *Mentor: How Along-the-Way Discipleship Can Change Your Life* (Nashville: LifeWay, 2018).



MENTORING:

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What's something interesting you learned because someone else showed you how?

QUESTION #1

*Someone helped you grow in Christ;
do the same for someone else.*



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

“My mentor told me I should be open to getting remarried,” Tom remarked. That wasn’t surprising, as I knew Tom was lonely after his wife of forty-nine years had passed away. What did surprise me was hearing he still had a mentor; after all, he was more than seventy years old. And his mentor was over ninety years old himself!

Tom is one of my heroes in the faith. I count him not only a friend, but also a mentor and a model of faith. His prayer life is powerful, and his commitment to godliness is deep. He walks so faithfully with God that I invite him to my seminary classes every semester because I want my students to know him.

Tom’s mentor invests in him. In turn, Tom walks beside me as my mentor. I then pour into the students I’m mentoring. Through these relationships, I teach them what Tom has taught me—and I’m trusting they will teach others, too. Mentoring: one person investing in another.

Our look this week at Paul and Timothy’s relationship helps us prepare to be mentors ourselves.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

2 Timothy 2:1-2

¹ You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Mentoring is about relationships, but those relationships don't happen by accident. They happen because we intentionally watch for God-given intersections and build God-centered friendships.

Before Paul's Christian conversion, you would not have wanted him as a mentor. He was a zealous persecutor (named Saul at that time) who arrested Christians and sent them to their deaths. While Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, God grabbed his attention by striking him down with a blinding light. Right then and there, Saul believed and was saved (Acts 9:1-19). The first step in being a mentor is intentionally turning from your sin and trusting Jesus to save you. That relationship matters more than any other.

Later, during his second missionary journey through the city of Lystra, Paul saw Timothy, a young man about whom others spoke well of (Acts 16:1-2). Timothy's mother and grandmother were believers (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-17), but we have no evidence that his Greek father followed Christ. It's possible, in fact, that Paul had led Timothy to follow Christ during an earlier missionary journey (Acts 14:5-7), and he continued to hear good reports about the young man.

Paul must've seen unique potential in Timothy. He wanted Timothy on his team, so he intentionally built a relationship with him. He gave Timothy opportunities to co-write letters (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Philem. 1). Timothy also checked on churches they had planted. Later, Paul longed for Timothy to be with him as he faced death (2 Tim. 4:9).

When has someone gone out of their way to encourage or strengthen your spiritual growth?

QUESTION #2

The second letter Paul wrote to Timothy could be called Paul's "last will and testament." He called Timothy "my son," showing that he saw himself as Timothy's father in the faith. He loved Timothy like a son, and their hearts were knit together in the work of proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, and planting churches. Paul could prepare for his own death knowing Timothy would carry on his work. Paul challenged Timothy to:

- ▶ **Be strong in grace.** Paul knew from his own journey that God could give Timothy all the strength he would need.
- ▶ **Teach others all he had learned from Paul.** Many had learned at Paul's feet, and they could attest to the truth of his teaching. Paul expected Timothy to find other faithful leaders and teach them all he had learned.
- ▶ **Challenge them to teach another generation of followers.** Paul taught Timothy. Timothy taught others. His students then would teach another generation of followers. That's exactly the way mentoring is supposed to work!

Think about those who invested in you. Even if no one served as an official mentor to you, others have modeled the Christian life for you. It's also possible God has already placed someone in your life for you to mentor—so keep looking and praying.

2 Timothy 3:10-13

¹⁰ You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.



Mentoring is about sharing life together. It's journeying together, encouraging each other in the difficult times and celebrating together in the victories. It's the mentee walking in the footsteps of the mentor until the mentee is ready to be a mentor to others.

In the midst of this journey, Paul affirmed God had watched over him and rescued him from all his troubles. Timothy may not have been with Paul in every situation described in these verses, but he was watching Paul's life closely. Paul could say with humble confidence that his life was worth imitating, for he was following Christ.

That's what mentors do: invite others into their lives, and then show them the way to follow the God who is faithful to watch over His own. Mentoring involves preparing others for the future based on lessons learned in the past. Paul wanted Timothy to be prepared for the persecution he knew his protégé would face.

Making time for others may be one of the most difficult tasks of mentoring. Most of us are already trying to spin too many plates. If we add this call to invest our lives in somebody else like Paul did, it can feel like it's too much to ask.

On the other hand, we can lose much if we don't make this effort. We'll miss opportunities to help others learn from what God has taught us. And we'll miss seeing believers love Jesus and walk faithfully in the midst of their own trials. Mentoring is about living life together—all of it. It will take time to invest in someone, but it will be worth the effort.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

When have you seen difficult seasons of life create opportunities for encouraging others?

QUESTION #3

Paul understood the importance of building a solid foundation. He may have been Timothy's mentor, but he was building on the foundation of God's Word. Timothy had a godly heritage through his mother and grandmother, and they had taught him the Scriptures from early in his childhood. Those Scriptures ultimately pointed Timothy to Jesus, in whom he found salvation by grace through faith.

Knowing Timothy would face his own struggles in ministry, Paul encouraged him to hold tightly to what he had learned and believed in the Word. Paul affirmed, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (CSB); that is, it was "God-breathed" (NIV) or "breathed out by God" (ESV) (v. 16) as the Holy Spirit guided the writers (2 Pet. 1:20-21) to pen the words of Scripture. Further, it is profitable for: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

By continuing in the Word, Timothy would be thoroughly equipped to be the man God intended him to be. He would be prepared to do all God commanded as he regularly spent time reading and following the Scriptures. Apart from God's Word, however, Timothy's work would be fruitless and faithless.

Spiritual growth in Timothy's life followed this process: his family grounded him in the Word of God, and Paul then built on that foundation. God gave Timothy not only his family of origin but also a mentor to help guide him. Together, they challenged Timothy to obey the Word. At the foundation of his growth, then, was his willingness to follow that Word.

Paul recognized that his own life was coming to an end. In the near future, he would have fully run his race (2 Tim. 4:6-7). No longer would he be around to help guide Timothy in his own work. His protégé would be on his own. Paul could die in peace, however, because he knew that the foundation of God's Word would long outlast his life.

What practical steps do you need to take to be a mentor for someone else?

QUESTION #4

How can our group prepare one another to mentor others?

QUESTION #5

MENTORS

Choose some of the following categories and write the name of someone who has served as a mentor to you. Then answer the questions.

Family Member: _____

Coach: _____

Teacher: _____

Employer: _____

Minister: _____

Friend: _____

Coworker: _____

Other: _____

How would you have liked these mentoring relationships to have been more profitable?

What can you take from these experiences to help others?

*"As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another!"*

— PROVERBS 27:17

LIVE IT OUT

How will you help someone else grow in Christ? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Pray.** Ask God for someone who might help and mentor you in the faith. Keep your eyes open for a potential mentor.
- ▶ **Invite.** Invite someone to share a meal with you. Share your testimony, and learn more about the other person. Trust the Lord in whether that meeting will begin a mentoring relationship.
- ▶ **Commit.** Make a commitment to meet regularly (at least twice per month) with someone. If you need help in the mentoring process, read *Mentor* by Chuck Lawless (LifeWay, 2018).



The mentoring relationships you form may bear little resemblance to Paul and Timothy's as far as outside pressures and suffering are concerned. But modeling our lives after theirs and the biblical principles they lived out will bear much fruit now and in the future.

My thoughts