

## Mentoring

### 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

We could define a mentor as:

*A caring person who takes the initiative to develop a personal, growing relationship with a younger or less mature individual to encourage spiritual and personal maturity.*

The mentor takes the initiative to show the student that he or she truly cares and wants to be involved in a tangible way in their life. The more mature person initiates the relationship because he or she understands the student's need for instruction and guidance.

We see this type of relationship reflected in the following passage:

- **Titus 2:2-5 HCSB** Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. (3) In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not addicted to much wine. *They are* to teach what is good, (4) so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and children, (5) to be sensible, pure, good homemakers, and submissive to their husbands, so that God's message will not be slandered.

Thus, in our congregation, the older, more experienced, more spiritually and emotionally mature should be offering their services to the younger, less experienced, less spiritually and emotionally mature.

The recipients, which I (for want of a better English word) refer to as "students", should react with respectful gratitude. As it is written,

- **Leviticus 19:32 HCSB** "You are to rise in the presence of the elderly and honor the old. Fear your God; I am the LORD.

Should you fail to do so,

- **Proverbs 5:11-14 HCSB** At the end of your life, you will lament when your physical body has been consumed, (12) and you will say, "How I hated discipline, and how my heart despised correction. (13) I didn't obey my teachers or listen closely to my mentors. (14) I was on the verge of complete ruin before the entire community."

Talking about mentoring is something of a fad today. You'll find discussions on the matter in both theological and business circles. Popular figures will often point back to a person in their past whose influence was instrumental in their becoming the success they are today.

However, I've found that even a lot of the supposedly theological discussions of mentoring are notoriously poor in their actual, biblical theology and I'd like to add my two cents' worth to the discussion if I may.

Deciding to be a mentor is not enough. Calling one's self a mentor is irrelevant. Being old doesn't necessarily mean you are wise. Let's examine what the Bible describes as the essential elements that lead to being a successful mentor.

Turn if you would to:

- **1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 HCSB** Although we could have been a burden as Christ's apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother nurtures her own children. (8) We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. (9) For you remember our labor and hardship, brothers. Working night and day so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God's gospel to you. (10) You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers. (11) As you know, like a father with his own children, (12) we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Twelve elements of successful mentoring include:

1. Not being a burden to the student. (v.7)
2. Being Christ's apostle/messenger. (v.7)

3. Being gentle as a nursing, nurturing mother. (v.7)
4. Care (v.8a)
5. Sharing the Gospel of God. (v.8)
6. Willingness to share one's life. (v.8b)
7. Making the student dear. (v.8c)
8. Willingness to labor and endure hardship. (v.9a)
9. Placing the relationship high in one's priorities. (v.9b)
10. Devout, righteous, and blameless conduct (v.10a)
11. Directing our efforts toward believers (v.10b)
12. Parental approach (v.11)
  - a. Encouragement
  - b. Comfort
  - c. Imploring
  - d. Evangelistic – walk worthy of God
  - e. Hopeful – God has called you