

Special Focus Session

July 14, 2019

MENTORING: HOW TO EQUIP AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS

2 Timothy 2:1-2; 3:10-17

I was introduced to the “222 Principle” (from 2 Timothy 2:2) on the mission field by veteran missionary Nolen Pridemore. There, the goal was multiplication, as we sought to develop as many church leaders as possible. But the methodology was actually *mentoring*, the intentional modeling of successful principles to those who will in turn, pass them on to others. Long before mentoring gained popularity in societal settings and the secular workplace, the apostle Paul reminded young Timothy that the Christian worldview and lifestyle is better “caught” than taught. Three key ideas stand out.

The instruction (2:1-2). At least 43 times, the Bible commands someone to “be strong.” In the Old Testament, the admonition is most often linked to facing challenges (or challengers). Over and over Joshua was told to “be strong and very courageous.” In the New Testament, the encouragement is most often attached to spiritual disciplines. Here, Timothy is told to be strong not in his own constitution, but rather “in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Those who are firmly established in the faith are thus qualified to intentionally model that faith for others. But there are qualifications set for those potential “mentorees” as well. First, potential mentorees had to be *faithful*. Much like Jesus’ warning about casting pearls before swine, Paul infers that not everybody is cut out to accept the responsibility of intentional discipling. Second, not only are mentorees required to be faithful, but they are also required to be *able*. In this case, they need to be able to teach others, thereby multiplying the efforts. I often remind my students that training someone is great; but *training trainers* is even better.

The example (3:10-13). In chapter 3, Paul returns to the subject of following a role model and then setting an example for others. Notice the depth and breadth of the apostle’s discipleship lessons. He commends Timothy for following his “teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance” (v. 10). Those principles made up the core of Paul’s curriculum. But the life lessons (experiences) Paul faced were also important enough to recount. Three principles are mentioned. First, persecution and suffering are part of living a Christian life in a pagan world (vv. 11-12). Second, the Lord is able to deliver His children from those difficulties (v. 11). And third, those kinds of threats (both persecution and deception) are only going to increase over time (v. 13). Again, Paul’s difficulties and how he handed them provided valuable lessons for the up-and-coming pastor.

The source (3:14-17). In these verses, Paul reminds Timothy of the sources from which he received his Christian training. First, Timothy had influential *teachers* in his life. Paul was not the first mentor Timothy had. Early in chapter 1, Paul commended Timothy, recalling, “your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois, then in your mother Eunice, and that I am convinced is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5). Second, Timothy had influential *truth* in his life, which since his early childhood had provided “wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 15). This truth, of course, consisted of the Scriptures. Looking back, it’s amazing to think of Timothy’s unique relationship to the Scripture. His mother and grandmother taught him the Old Testament., but his mentor Paul was writing portions of the New Testament before his very eyes,

and Timothy himself was included in it! While Timothy's *inclusion* in the Bible may be unique, his *exposure* to it need not be. All believers, regardless of our current progress in the Christian walk, should be both receiving instruction from someone a step or two ahead of us in the journey, and giving instruction to someone coming along close behind us. That's what mentoring really is: intentional, two-part, two-way, both caught and taught, Bible-centered, Christianity-on-display, discipleship.