

Spiritual Mentors

Written by Scott Evans

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Have you ever had a mentor? You may ask; what is a mentor? Merriam Webster's Dictionary, who has been defining words since 1828, defines mentor this way; "to teach or give advice or guidance to someone."

Throughout my life I have enjoyed the mentoring of many people. As I was building my career in business I looked to many trusted people who "took me under their wing" and showed me the ropes of the business world. They were mentors for sure. After I gained some experience of my own, I became to mentor to young men and women just beginning their careers in business.

However, today I am talking about spiritual mentors. These are some of the most important people you will find on this earth! They are Christians who take an interest in your spiritual well-being. They invest their time, impart their knowledge and wisdom and encourage you to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ. While I have had a number of mentors come into and out of my life over the years, I have been extremely fortunate to have three key spiritual mentors that impacted my life tremendously. The first was when I was a child. My Sunday School teacher was an incredibly wise and understanding older lady who loved kids and taught me all of those wonderful Bible Stories. She made them come alive and kept me interested in learning more about those great stories and the people who were the central characters of them. The second mentor in my life was an older gentleman, who was a deacon in my church, that I got to know when I was a senior in high school. Again, he took an interest in me and in my spiritual growth. The most influential spiritual mentor that I had was a man that attended my church when I lived in Pennsylvania. He was also an older man who had been a missionary to Africa and truly loved the Lord and the Bible. He and his wife were retired and lived only a short distance from me. We spent hours talking over coffee, eating lunches, going on walks, participating in Bible Studies, etc. We shared a love of Christ and Southern Gospel Music. He truly impacted my life in ways that he will never know.

Of course, along the way I have also had the opportunity to be a spiritual mentor. I attended a three-day seminar several years ago in Lancaster, PA on spiritual mentoring. The seminar suggested that each Christian should have a minimum of three mentors in their life at any given time. We should be Upward Mentoring, Peer Mentoring and Downward Mentoring always in our life. The Apostle Paul was a great mentor in all three categories.

Look in Acts 22, verse 3 where Paul writes; *"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."* Gamaliel was a mentor to Paul and he was one of the premier teachers of the law in Paul's early years. No matter how mature you are as a Christian, you need to have people in your life who can continue to teach you and challenge you to increase your knowledge about the Bible and Jesus Christ. This might be a pastor, or a teacher, or perhaps even an author whose books expand your knowledge, mind and heart in spiritual matters. In my life right now my pastor and a handful of authors fill this role.

Staying with Paul as our example we think of peer mentoring. Of course, Paul's peers were the

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other apostles. I would imagine that all of the apostles had a wonderful peer mentoring relationship with each other. Peer mentors are those people who encourage us in our daily walk with Christ. They teach us and we teach them. True mentors will also “call us out” from time to time. Do some research on the relationship between Paul and Barnabas and you will get an idea of what I am writing about. I think of the scripture found in Proverbs 27:17 which says; *“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* I am fortunate to have a couple of mentors in my life right now that are not afraid to get in my face if needed. I also can be that type of mentor with my very best friends. This is always done with a spirit of meekness and loving kindness. We need to appreciate these kinds of people in our life and we can never have enough of them.

The final type of mentoring we need in our lives is downward mentoring. Paul’s greatest example of downward mentoring is Timothy. In the opening verses of First Timothy, Paul states his feelings about Timothy; *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.”* In verses

1 and 2 Paul calls Timothy his
own son in the faith.

We all need to mentor less mature Christians that we know. I love to teach and have often taught Bible Studies and Sunday School Classes which has made it easy to serve in a mentoring role. Regardless of your opinion on your own teaching abilities, you need to spend time mentoring younger Christians in any way that you can. I have been fortunate to mentor several young Christians over the years and there are a couple of wonderful “young” Christians that I am mentoring right now.

Mentoring in the Christian Life is very important. The Christian Life was never meant to be a solo journey. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ is there with you always but we also need other Christians on this earth to walk with us and encourage us. We need to have an upward mentor that can challenge us and help us grow spiritually. We need to have peer mentors. People that can we teach and can teach us. They also are not afraid to call us on it when we make a mistake. Finally, we need a downward mentor, someone that we can teach and mold and assist them in their spiritual growth. The wonderful thing about mentoring is that we can learn from everyone we have a mentoring relationship with; mentoring works both ways! The mentoring relationship is one that is rewarding for you as well as those being mentored and it can increase your faith and encourage all of you on your daily journey. Mentoring is for everyone so be a mentor today!