

VIRTUE 23

MENTORSHIP

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

—2 Timothy 2:2-3

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

—Proverbs 27:17

Joab said: "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you are to rescue me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will rescue you. Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight."

—1 Chronicles 19:12-13

Being a mentor to someone means providing him or her with wise and influential counseling when he or she is open to receiving it. Unlike parenting, which can be more direct, mentoring is an exchange of ideas and questions (by the mentee) and advice and input (by the mentor).

Without mentorship, the succession of true values and character traits will die out. I attended a presentation on fatherhood put on by

Focus on the Family where the facilitator asked a pointed question that challenged every dad in the room. He asked, “How many of you have a written plan for raising your kids with Christian values?” About five hands went up in a room of over three hundred. He followed by saying “MTV (Music Television) has a written marketing plan to own your child by age fourteen.” The lure of “sex, drugs, and rock and roll” were just some of the tools he outlined in MTV’s plan to capture the mind and attention of every young teenager by such a young age. It was shocking.

While I do not actually believe that a parent’s plan, or a mentor’s plan, absolutely needs to be put in writing, I do think that it should be *intentional and consistent*. The book of Deuteronomy guides us on just exactly how this can be done:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:5-10).

The practice of mentorship needs to be *constant* and *opportunistic*, but also *timely*. Ephesians 5:16 cautions us to “make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” One of the most effective Christians I know goes by the name of Pastor Mark. Mark leads a youth ministry at a large church, and I have seen him in action for several years. Mark makes the most of every opportunity and sometimes even pushes the envelope with new acquaintances. His philosophy is simple: He lives every day like it could be his last, and he does not know if and when he will ever see that person again.

So wherever he can, however he can, he evangelizes and mentors others.

Knighthood and the virtues thereof have only been continued through the ages through mentorship. A true knight leaves a legacy and passes on his virtues to others.

REFLECT

A coat is given to a Knight to symbolize the great ordeals that he must suffer in order to honor knighthood. For just as the coat is worn above the other garments of iron, and faces the rain, and receives blows before they reach the hauberk or other armor, so a Knight is chosen to sustain larger burdens than another man. And all the men who serve under him and are in his care ought, whenever necessary, to seek him out for help; and the Knight should defend them to the extent of his power.

—Ramon Lull

A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear. Like the coolness of snow at harvest time is a trustworthy messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the spirit of his masters.

—Proverbs 25:11-13

RESPOND

1. How has your life been impacted by mentors?
2. Who has God brought into your life that needs to be mentored?

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3. How can mentors have a more significant impact in our lives than friends and family?
4. Sometimes mentoring others requires using different strategies. Sometimes a mentor should be tactfully direct. In other situations, a mentor should be a consultant, waiting to be asked to give advice, or giving softer advice. When should these different roles be used for mentoring others?
5. What are some of the tools of tactfulness that help in effective mentoring?