

REVISED EDITION



MENTOR

HOW ALONG-THE-WAY
DISCIPLESHIP WILL
CHANGE YOUR LIFE



Chuck Lawless

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHUCK LAWLESS

My name is Chuck, and I'm from Ohio, where I served as a pastor for fourteen years before joining the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. I was on the staff at Southern for fifteen years, first as a professor and then as the dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism. I am now the dean and vice president of graduate studies and ministry centers at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. I also serve as the global theological-education consultant for the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Part of my role involves connecting with college and seminary students in North America and around the world.

My wife, Pam, and I were introduced by two church secretaries, and we've been married for more than twenty years. We live in the Richmond, Virginia, area. Visit us online at chucklawless.com.

Over the years I've had the privilege of mentoring men who now serve God all around the world. You'll read about some of those experiences in this Bible study. I'm thrilled that you want to learn more about mentoring. Thanks for taking the time to complete this study. As you do, I pray that God will direct you to develop your own mentoring relationships.

WELCOME TO THE MENTOR PROCESS

WE WERE ON A RAFT HEADED DOWN THE OCOEE RIVER IN TENNESSEE. THE RAPIDS WERE ROUGH, AND THE WATER WAS SPEWING, BUT SELDOM HAD I HAD AS MUCH FUN. WHAT MADE THE TRIP FUN, THOUGH, WASN'T SO MUCH THE RAFTING BUT THE COMPANY I WAS WITH—BRANDON AND CHRIS, A COUPLE OF GUYS IN WHOM I HAD BEEN INVESTING MY LIFE. BOTH WERE STUDENTS WHERE I WAS TEACHING. ONE WAS PREPARING TO BE A PASTOR AND THE OTHER A MISSIONARY.

I had taken my first rafting trip the previous year with Brandon. He was a rafting veteran, and I was a rookie. He taught me strategies like how to read the rapids, how to row effectively, and how to lock in my feet when approaching the rapids. I may have been his mentor, but he was the teacher that day. And the waters became less a threat to me because I knew he was with me.

That's what this Bible study is about—people traveling through life together, navigating rough waters when necessary, and staying focused on the goal. It's about one person pouring his life into another person until the student becomes the teacher. And ultimately, it's about the mentor sending the mentee out so that he can guide others on their journey.



Welcome to this journey. We'll explore how to live our faith by purposefully walking through life together. The sessions in this study are based on Scripture, which is inspired by God (see 2 Timothy 3:16). They're also written with a certain audience in mind—Christians who are mentoring other Christians in the context of a local church or ministry.

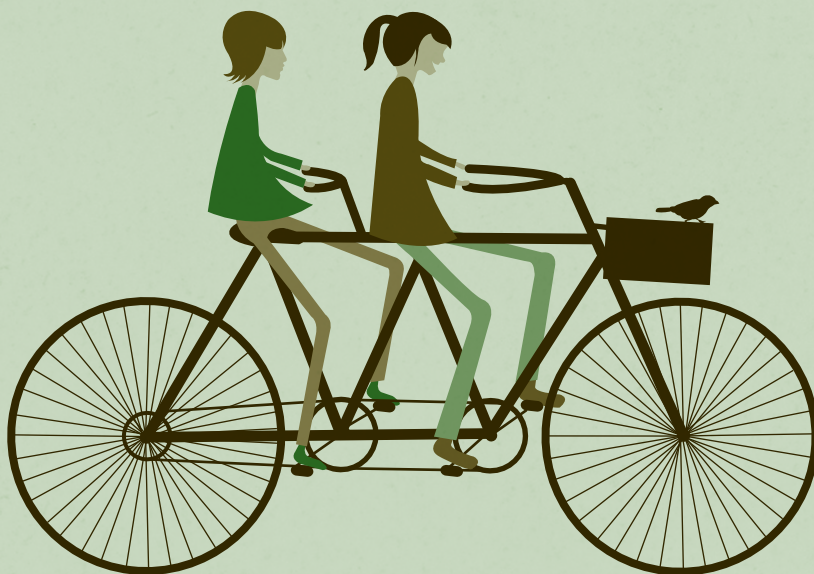
Not only will we examine Jesus' practices in mentoring, but we'll also look at Paul's work of mentoring in the early church. In the New Testament Paul and Timothy are classic examples of a mentor and a mentee. Paul, an apostle, church leader, and missionary, mentored Timothy, a young minister and evangelist, who in turn then mentored others in the faith. All of us need to be both a Paul (a mentor) and a Timothy (a mentee). We need to be influenced and to influence others. I hope this study will help you become both. The road map for our walk together looks like this.

Sometimes mentoring is messy, but the walk is worth the effort.

Session 1 describes the journey of a mentor: why that role exists and what it looks like. Sessions 2–3 focus on Jesus and Paul as examples of first-century mentors. Sessions 4–5 offer practical tools and strategies for mentoring and being mentored. Session 6 points out potholes and possibilities we could face as we journey through life together in faith.

Each session will take you into the Bible, challenge you to think about your life, and encourage you to invest in others. Reflection questions and application suggestions will encourage you to do more than simply read the words; the goal is for you to do something with what you learn. Each session also includes a general suggestion for those who are already in a mentoring relationship.

So let's press forward together. My prayer is that all of us will learn from one another along the way.



Session One

UNDERSTANDING ALONG-THE-WAY DISCIPLESHIP

My list of people who've invested in my life is a long one: Randy Richards, Glenn Davidson, Steve Bauer, Brother Jack Tichenor, Don Betts, Lawrence Langford, Sonney Allen, Ed Hensley, Big Dave Ensor, Ronnie Allen, Ralph Harvey, and Thom Rainer. Their roles are all different—pastors, deacons, laypersons, professors, fathers in the faith, father-in-law—but these men and others have changed my life. Some earned college, even seminary, degrees. Some taught me in Sunday School, and some taught me how to conduct Sunday School. Some would be surprised that they're even on my list, and that's one of the facts I love most about them.

These men have been mentors to me—disciplers, coaches, friends. I've had the privilege of walking in the shadows of some great men of God. Maybe you've had the same privilege. If not, perhaps completing this study will help you find a mentor or become one.

Who has invested in and influenced your life?

How would you describe their motivation for investing in you?

WHAT'S MENTORING ANYWAY? A SIMPLE DEFINITION

Here's my definition of *mentoring*. Mentoring is:

A God-given relationship in which one growing Christian encourages and equips another believer to reach his or her potential as a disciple of Christ¹

We'll explore this definition as we move through this session.

Mentoring is about relationships.

The Bible is filled with stories of people who invested in other people. Moses and Aaron. Moses and Joshua. Eli and Samuel. Naomi and Ruth. Elijah and Elisha. Jesus and the disciples. Paul and Timothy. Paul and Silas. Paul and Titus. Barnabas and John Mark. This list shouldn't surprise us, because God is a God of relationships.

This fact is obvious, not only from God's very nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 13:13) but also from the creation account. God created human beings to be in relationship with Him and one another (see Genesis 2:8-25). When He chose to provide salvation, He did it personally by coming to earth, dying as the sacrifice in our place, and breaking the power of death (see Romans 5:12).

Now God has given us the church—that is, Christian people—to relate to us, teach us, and guide us. The church loves one another, serves one another, prays for one another, confronts one another, and forgives one another. This body of Christ, when obedient to its marching orders, produces disciples by preaching the gospel and teaching believers (see Matthew 28:18-20). When we develop discipling relationships, then, we're doing what God told us to do.



Watch the introductory video
"Chuck Lawless on Mentoring,"
available at lifeway.com/mentor.

Mentors thrive in divine intersections.

I'm amazed by the way God orchestrates divine intersections in His church, crossroads in which we meet the people He has waiting for us. Brother Jack Tichenor was one divine intersection for me. In many ways Brother Jack was the mentor who guided me in most of the major decisions I made as a young pastor, although he never officially served as my pastor. I met him only after he retired from being a pastor and joined my home church, yet he quickly made time for another preacher boy. Many days I sat with him in his den (or in his garage watching his electric trains go by) as we talked about ministry. He was such a natural mentor that more than forty young men under his teaching entered the ministry during his sixty years of preaching.

One of those young men was Will. Will's family members had been longtime members of Brother Jack's church, and they also joined my home church after Jack retired. Will was four years younger than I, but we quickly connected. I became his Sunday School teacher, and he and I spent many hours together during our teen years. He later became my college roommate and led music at the first church I pastored. Almost two decades later I also served as his supervising professor in his doctoral work. Both unofficially and officially, I was blessed for years to mentor Will, who had first learned under Brother Jack, my mentor, long before I met either one of them.

Divine intersections. God is a specialist at creating them.

What divine intersections have you experienced?

Describe the person who's your Brother Jack.

Mentoring requires a growing Christian.

In a mentoring relationship one person leads, and another follows. Somebody must be in front, even if only slightly. Only when we're growing can we guide others toward growth.

Ideally, believers have both mentors who teach them and disciples they teach. We find an example in the New Testament in the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul was a leading apostle in the early New Testament church and the writer of multiple New

Testament letters. He served as a mentor to Timothy, a younger early-church leader. We all need a Paul and a Timothy. Our Paul challenges us to grow, and we then urge our Timothy to grow also. In this way mentoring becomes a generational effort as the person we mentor gleans not only from our influence but also from the influence of our mentors (and our mentor's mentor and so on).

My friend Tom may not think of himself as a Paul to me, but he has been in many ways. I first knew him from a distance as a great preacher and leader in my denomination, and I met him when his son became my student. Over the years I've watched him lead a church, retire from pastoral ministry, take on another denominational role, walk beside his first wife during a long bout with cancer, and pray that all of his grandchildren would become followers of Jesus.

Because I wasn't raised in a Christian home, I needed a role model like Tom to help me know how to love my wife and lead my home. I know the Bible tells me to love Pam as Christ loved the church (see Ephesians 5:25), but that doesn't mean I always fully understand how to do that. Men like Tom challenge me to improve as a husband.

Tom's first wife passed away, and he has now remarried. What amazed me most was that Tom first thought about remarrying when his mentor—then more than ninety years old—challenged him to consider that possibility. A ninety-year-old growing Christian pushed a seventy-year-old growing Christian to keep growing. That's what mentoring should look like.

A mentor has to keep growing spiritually, but mentors are seldom ahead of their disciples in every area of life. Everybody has strengths and weaknesses, and everybody has room for growth. Your mentor (or you as a mentor) might be strong in Bible study but weak in prayer. You may have more passion for personal evangelism than for social justice. A mentor who's single won't be as prepared to give marriage advice as one who's married.

Our goal as mentors is to teach from our strengths and keep working on our weaknesses so that we can continue to grow. That's another reason we need mentors. They point out our weaknesses, challenge us to admit our struggles, give us direction in dealing with those issues, rejoice with us when we experience victory, and love us anyway when we fail. Everybody benefits when our ever-growing mentors motivate us to keep moving forward.

Mentoring is a balance of encouraging and equipping.

Following Christ is difficult. A very real enemy fights against us (see Ephesians 6:11-12). Trials happen. Disappointments come. Friends sometimes reject our message or betray



In Greek mythology the story of Mentor is found in Homer's famous work *The Odyssey*. When Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, went to war, he entrusted the care of his son, Telemachus, to a friend, Mentor. The name came to designate a wise teacher, guide, and counselor for another person.

us. Trusting God is difficult when life seems unfair or the future is unclear. Without encouragement giving up is a real temptation. Mentors can help in times like these. Good mentors encourage us when we're stressed and equip us when we need training.

John is one of those encouragers in my life. Serving on the mission field for many years, he faced some of the most difficult situations I've ever heard of. Still I've watched him reach out to young pastors and missionaries, reminding them that God is bigger than anything they face and strengthening their faith with his presence. I've never been with him when he didn't say something to me like "I'm glad the Lord gave us this friendship." If you have somebody like John on your side, you'll press forward through tough times. That kind of encouragement can make a big difference.

Who encourages you like that? A parent? A teacher? Another believer?

We need more than encouragement, though. In the midst of life's struggles, we also need help doing what God calls us to do. We know we need to study the Bible, but we don't always know how. Pastors tell us that prayer matters, but we don't always understand how to pray. Telling others about Jesus is essential but not always modeled. We don't need someone to tell us what to do as much as we need someone to show us how to do it. We need equipping.

In addition to encouraging, mentoring teaches Christian disciplines and life skills. Encouragement without equipping might lead to restored hope, but seldom does it produce life transformation—the goal of mentoring. Mentoring should change the way we live.

When I first started mentoring many years ago, I assumed I would focus almost exclusively on teaching spiritual disciplines like Bible study, prayer, and fasting. Since then I've met young people who want to be equipped in many more areas. The list is extensive: understanding the opposite gender, relating to parents, budgeting, retirement planning, buying life insurance, understanding God's will, playing racquetball, grilling a steak, buying a house, writing a résumé, finding a church, dealing with a health crisis, overcoming temptation, raising kids, purchasing a car, painting a wall, and on and on. This type of life-on-life equipping reminds us that our faith affects every area of our lives.

From your experience have your fellow believers been better at encouraging you or equipping you? Explain.

Describe one area in which you need equipping.

Mentoring is about transformation.

The goal of Christian mentoring is that the mentor lives like Jesus, the disciple becomes more and more like Jesus, and both continue to lead others to do the same. It's hard to find a loftier goal than becoming like Jesus. Mentoring matters in an eternal way.

Later in this session (and in session 3 of this study) we'll focus on some of the apostle Paul's writing to Titus, one of Paul's disciples among the early church leaders (see 2 Corinthians 8:16-17,23). Titus was to challenge people to invest their lives in other believers, just as Paul had invested his life in Timothy, Titus, and others. Paul expected believers to fulfill this calling because he knew God's purpose for all believers:

Those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29).

According to this verse, if you're a follower of Jesus, God is in the process of making you more like His Son. The word *conformed* speaks of God's changing us, remaking us so that our lives model Christ. Ultimately, God will completely change us in heaven, so we'll be like His Son. While we're here on earth, He moves us in that direction. We call this process *sanctification*, defined by one theologian as "a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."² Letting go of sin and living more like Jesus are two critical elements in this transformation.

We know for certain that God alone gives us victory as He makes us like Christ, but we cooperate with Him in this process. There's footwork for us to do in daily turning away from sin, putting our faith in God, and putting on the character of His Son. These verses reveal the choices we need to make as God transforms us:

Put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator (Colossians 3:8-10).

Since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run



Titus is one of three New Testament books (along with 1–2 Timothy) commonly known as the Pastoral Letters. These letters include instructions from Paul to his protégés in the faith as they worked to address specific issues in New Testament churches.

with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Ridding yourselves of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (James 1:21-22).

With your minds ready for action, be sober-minded and set your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

How does our responsibility to do our part in spiritual growth fit into the concept of mentoring? It applies to both the mentors, who are responsible for their own spiritual footwork, and the people being mentored, who need to be encouraged in their spiritual footwork. Titus had the responsibility of walking in faith as these Scriptures describe, but Paul, his mentor, helped him figure out how to do that. Their mentoring relationship probably encouraged both of them in this effort.

Paul urged his disciples to follow his example and thereby follow Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 11:1). He expected the people he mentored to mature in Christ, and he modeled Christianity in front of them and alongside them as they aimed for spiritual growth. The believers Paul mentored were becoming more and more like Jesus in the process. This is the key to mentoring.

Think about the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, in which Jesus tells us to make disciples. To be like Jesus is to be willing to reproduce ourselves in other disciples, release them to do God's work (whether as laypersons or pastors), and support them as they invest in others—just as Jesus did. This is a foundational truth: mentors who invest in others as Jesus did will produce other mentors, and lives will be transformed.

Whom do you know who's growing to be more and more like Jesus?

Who's more like Jesus because of spending time with you?

WHAT ABOUT MENTORING IN THE EARLY CHURCH? A BIBLICAL DESCRIPTION

Some people see mentoring as just hanging out together. There's a place in mentoring for just hanging out, but biblical mentoring is more intentional and focused than that. Read these directions for mentoring that Paul sent to Titus:

You are to proclaim things consistent with sound teaching. Older men are to be self-controlled, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance. In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children, to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered. In the same way, encourage the young men to be self-controlled in everything. Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that any opponent will be ashamed, because he doesn't have anything bad to say about us (Titus 2:1-8).

Clearly, mentoring is more than just hanging out. It's about along-the-way life transformation that illustrates the gospel.

Mentoring crosses spiritual generations.

Titus was working with the Christians in Crete, a poorly organized congregation threatened by false teachers. One solution to the problems in Crete was for growing believers to ground younger believers in the Christian faith. Older men (most likely men who were old enough to have raised families of their own) were to model Christian living for others by being clearheaded, respectable, and sensible. Their lives were to be characterized by good judgment and Christian dignity, their faith grounded in true doctrine, their love for God and others genuine, and their patience under trial obvious. This passage suggests that the older men were to model their faith particularly for the younger men in the church.

Sonney Allen modeled his faith in this way for me. Sonney was a deacon in the first church in which I served as the pastor. I was young, in my early twenties, and Sonney was a more mature believer. He hadn't attended college or seminary, but he was fully educated in life. He taught me about remodeling a home, practicing evangelism, and



"Paul wrote multiple times commanding converts to, 'Be ye followers of me.' Their Bible first had legs."—Waylon Moore, mentoring expert (mentoring-disciples.org)

loving all kinds of people. I watched him as he loved his wife and son with a deep, sacrificial love. More important, I knew he loved me regardless of whether I made bad or good decisions. As a young pastor, I needed that kind of support.

Sonney later developed multiple illnesses. His pain was great, yet I never heard him complain. He still laughed, worshiped, and shared the gospel even as he was dying. Just before he died, I was honored to dedicate my doctoral dissertation to him. That was the least I could do for a mentor who showed me how to live as a godly man should.

The passage in Titus also has direction for older women to mentor younger women. These older women (old enough to have raised their families) were to live lives of reverence, not gossiping or overindulging in wine. They were to teach “what is good” (v. 3), not by formal schooling but by informal life-on-life modeling. Specifically, they were responsible for training younger women how to live their Christian faith. They were to teach them to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to take care of their homes in kindness, and to graciously follow their husbands’ direction. By living holy lives and teaching others to do the same, the older women would honor God’s Word.

It might surprise us to read that the older women were instructed to teach younger women such basic Christian responsibilities. Keep in mind, though, that this was still a new faith with a lifestyle ethic that was counterpoint to the worldview of the day. Even loving children as gifts from God rather than merely as economic blessings (particularly sons) was a radically different mindset. Younger women needed older Christian women to show them the way.

I think about Carol as I write these words. She was the mother of two teenagers, but she also poured her life into a group of young women in her small group in our church. She was much more to them than just their teacher; she was their friend, their model, and their listening ear. She loved them in their struggles but then prodded them to leave the nest when they were ready to lead others. Her life conversations with them during the week were often as important to them as their Sunday-morning activities. Carol was for these young women their Titus 2 example, an older woman who crossed the generations to make disciples.

For men only: What older man has been most influential in your life? How would you describe his investment?



The term *homemakers* in Titus 2:5 doesn’t mean that woman can’t work outside the home but that the home should be the central place of ministry for a wife and mother.

For women only: What older woman has been most influential in your life? What words would you use to describe her?

Mentoring is done by believers who are growing in spiritual maturity.

After addressing older men and women, Paul turned his attention to Titus. Even as a younger man, Titus was to model Christian faithfulness for other young men. This is because whatever his age, a man growing in his faith, like Titus, has something to invest in other young men. Titus could model basic holy living by doing good deeds, discerning right doctrine, and exhibiting dignity and seriousness. Titus's words, whether in formal teaching or informal conversation, were to be so biblically consistent that even his opponents would have no case against him.

Here we learn a simple truth about mentoring: while mentoring through spiritual generations—older to younger—is essential, it's not the only model for mentoring. You don't always have to be older than people to be their mentor. Even younger believers can be mentors as long as they're being discipled. Investing in others requires only that you're one step ahead in some area—that you've learned something you can give to others. Whatever your age, life experience and Christian growth make the most effective tools for mentors.

Mentoring requires self-control.

Notice the number of times in this passage Paul called believers to be self-controlled. The older men and women and the younger men and women were to show self-restraint and mature judgment. They were to maintain control of their passions, thoughts, and words. Apparently, this was a significant issue for the believers in Crete, perhaps because one heresy running through the group was the idea that Christians could live in whatever manner they wanted without regard for morality.

Exhibiting self-control in an out-of-control culture isn't easy. One way to learn that kind of maturity is by watching others and allowing them to train you, that is, through mentoring. It's one thing to listen to people tell us to be self-controlled; it's another matter to watch them maintain control when they're wrongly accused, unfairly treated, dealing with a disappointment, or making mistakes. A Titus 2 ministry looks like this: believers who've been there train others who haven't, so when they get there, they'll honor God through the way they live. The evidence of our faith is best seen in day-to-day living.

Review the characteristics Paul told Titus the believers must attain (self-controlled, levelheaded, worthy of respect, sensible, sound in faith, etc.). Which do you think are most difficult to achieve and why?

Why do you think Paul emphasized self-control within each age and gender group?

WHY DOES IT MATTER? REASONS FOR MENTORING

When I became a believer many years ago, church discipleship ministries were organized almost entirely through directed Bible studies in small groups. These studies are important in discipleship, but they're not enough. They miss the most obvious New Testament means of disciple making: one-on-one, face-to-face mentoring. There are many reasons we should still invest our time and ourselves in this basic relational model.

Mentoring is biblical.

Jesus produced disciples by first investing in a group of twelve men, then more deliberately in three of those men, and most likely more specifically in one of those men—Peter. Jesus called them to be with Him, taught them, empowered them, prayed in their presence, sent them out, challenged them, called them to account, and even prepared a meal for them. They in turn became leaders in the early church.

The apostle Paul followed Jesus' model by pouring his life into a few young men like Timothy. This young protégé watched Paul minister, walked in his shadow, rejoiced with him when lives were changed, and prayed for him when he was persecuted. What joy Paul must have felt in knowing that after he was gone, Timothy would carry on the work of the gospel.

If Jesus and Paul made disciples through this means, it's a good pattern for us to follow.

Mentoring reinforces the truth of the Word.

When we watch our mentors share their faith, we're more likely to share our own faith. Spouses with godly marriages give us the invaluable gift of seeing Christian homes in



For a glimpse into a mentoring relationship in action, watch video session 1, "Jason and Jordan's Story," available at lifeway.com/mentor.

motion. Life becomes an effective classroom when we get to see in action what we hear in God's Word. Many of God's truths came to life for me in the context of watching somebody else, even when the relationship wasn't an official mentoring relationship.

I met Herbert when the church where he was a deacon called me as its pastor. I was very much a rookie pastor, and I worried about every decision I made. I preached God's promises without first trusting them myself. Herbert, though, had learned over the years to trust God fully. He believed it was foolish to worry, because God was in control. Through this humble, trusting man I was reminded that God always keeps His word.

Ruby played that same role for the young women in our church. She was energetic, friendly, exuberant, passionate—the kind of person who exudes the presence of Jesus. When she started praying, you could tell that she touched heaven with her serious, heartfelt praying. She taught us that fervent prayer from righteous people makes a difference.

Mentoring requires mentors to guard their lives against the enemy's attacks.

If you choose to be a Christian mentor, you'll wear a bull's-eye on your back for Satan's attacks. If he can seriously wound the mentor, those who follow will bear the scars of that fall. Never does a mentor fall without a ripple effect. Understanding that, if you choose to be a mentor, you must guard yourself.

Why do people in leadership, who have great influence over other people, often fall to the enemy's attacks? My friend J. D. Greear, a pastor in North Carolina, warns that living in isolation contributes to the moral failures plaguing our culture. God created us to be in relationship with Him and others, and anything less than that opens the door for Satan. Greear says:

God never intended any of us to live alone. Deep friendships with people you live and work and go to church with are a part of discipleship. The shepherd is still a sheep.³

A shepherd fights the same battles that the sheep fight. This confirms what mentoring is: "a God-given relationship in which one growing Christian encourages and equips another believer to reach his or her potential as a disciple of Christ." Mentoring creates a positive cycle. Good mentors stand their ground against the enemy because they don't want to harm their witness before their mentees and the unbelieving world. And in the very practice of mentoring, they're keeping themselves in relationship with other growing Christians, thus reinforcing their ability to stand their ground.

Who's watching your life? Who would know if you fell?

What steps do you consider essential to guard your life against the enemy's attacks?

Mentoring relationships offer a safe place to deal with failure.

Other than mentoring relationships believers have few people to hold them accountable in their faith walks. Mentors model holiness, call their disciples to the same, and hold them accountable to that standard.

What happens when disciples fail to meet that standard? In that case the mentor has the opportunity to model the kind of forgiveness, grace, and mercy that enable the people being mentored to correct their course and return to the fight. In mentoring relationships confession is essential. People must be utterly honest. Spiritual full disclosure brings our sin out of the enemy's darkness into God's light, where we can eradicate it through repentance and forgiveness.

Mentors who grant grace to people who've failed aren't ignoring or negating the consequences of sin. Instead, they're modeling God's love to fallen but repentant people. Good mentoring creates an atmosphere for honest confession because the mentee knows that admitting the truth won't result in less love or acceptance.

In this kind of relationship, spiritual growth occurs in two directions. The mentor strives for holiness out of obedience to God and love for the mentee, and the mentee chooses obedience out of gratitude to God for His mercy shown through the mentor. Paul described dealing with this kind of issue:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

In effective mentoring mentors pick up struggling disciples, always being careful to guard their own hearts. Safety in failure discourages failure.



We don't hear the word *mentee* often. Although it sounds like a marine animal, it's the term for a person in the process of being mentored or disciplined. Some people use *mentoree*.

Mentoring produces the next generation of Christian leaders.

I keep in my files a Father's Day card from Brandon, my Ocoee River guide in whom I invested significant time. The message on the card is simple, but it reverberates like a megaphone to me: "Thanks for being a father in my life." That card encourages me to press on when I get tired of the bureaucracy, paperwork, meetings, and tedious tasks that sometimes accompany a seminary administrative job. This kind of divine intersection is one of the greatest benefits of mentoring.

Mentoring is costly. We have to prioritize; spending time with others usually means deleting something else from the calendar. We have to be vulnerable; our own sins are magnified when others are watching. We often have to spend money; the costs of study resources, shared meals, and occasional travel expenses quickly add up. We may be misunderstood; mentors sometimes get accused of having favorites. And too often we experience disappointment; mentees sometimes fail. There are times when a mentor might wonder whether mentoring is worth the effort.

Being mentored is also risky. Your mentor might disappoint you. You might expect more than he or she can give. The time required usually means you have to give up something else. The push to live a holy life and maintain accountability might make you uncomfortable. You may be less willing to invest in somebody else in turn.

On the other hand, the risks you take as you're mentored might result in the amazing gift of a person in your life. God might give you a mentor and friend whose faith challenges you to greater faithfulness. The risks you take as you mentor others may breed disciples whose faith is potent and whose progress is obvious. You may grow spiritually as never before, and you might watch God use the people you've disciplined in ways you had never dreamed. You might receive a father, son, mother, or daughter in the faith.

I'll take that risk any day.



Confession means "to say the same thing about, to agree with." When we confess, we agree with God about our sin.

THROUGH THE WEEK

- > **CONNECT:** Make a list of people who've been Pauls for you. Make a phone call, send an email or text, or write a letter to say thanks. Let them know what you've gained by walking through life with them.
 - > **PRAY:** If you don't currently have a mentor, begin asking God to provide one.
 - > **OBSERVE:** Watch for divine intersections in your life this week.
 - > **A SUGGESTION FOR MENTORS:** Make sure your mentees know the full story of your Christian journey. Take time to tell them about your ups and downs, victories and defeats, questions and answers. Invite them to ask questions about your journey.
 - > **A SUGGESTION FOR MENTEES:** Whenever God teaches you something, be sure to tell someone else what you've learned. Get in the habit of sharing what you're discovering along the way, and God might provide someone you can invest in.
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1. Chuck Lawless, *Making Disciples through Mentoring* (Forest, VA, and Elkton, MD: Church Growth Institute, 2002), 14.
2. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 746.
3. J. D. Greear, "Why Pastors Fall into Moral Sin," September 30, 2010, www.jdgreear.com.



Leading a group? See the leader guide at the back of this book. You'll also find session videos, supplemental articles, and teaching tools at lifeway.com/mentor.