

Mentoring Men for Ministry

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Introduction

“Where are the men?”

The first time I heard this question, I was attending a Wednesday night service ten years ago at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, SC. My soon-to-be wife was a member of a college mission team that presented its work there that night. Her team consisted of two leaders (both female) and eleven college students, one of whom was male. While they stood on stage, Pastor Mark Minnick asked, “Where are the men?” To be honest, I initially thought he was encouraging the single men in the midst to consider pursuing one of these ladies! But what he meant became quickly apparent. Why are there a dozen or so women who would give up their summer in Africa, while just one man was willing to go?

The last time I heard this question was February 10, 2008 at the opening of our church’s missions conference. David Hosaflook, one of our missionaries to Albania, had attended the Student Global Impact conference in early January, after which he taught a week-long missions block course at a Christian college. His conclusion: “Where are the men?” The number of ladies in his SGI workshops roughly doubled the number of men. Where are the men?

There are many reasons cited as to why women tend to be more interested in vocational Christian ministry than men: women are more tender of heart to the things of the Lord, men are interested in their careers and making lots of money, and so forth. While it is no doubt true that the dearth of godly male leaders is due to issues of sin and love of this world, we must stop and ask whether there is another contributing factor, namely, whether we as pastors are fulfilling our responsibility to produce the next generation of godly male leaders.

Some clarification may be appropriate here.

1. Some pastors would no doubt relish the opportunity to mentor a younger man, provided there were younger men to mentor! My pastoral experience has come in a church of 700+ members with four theologically conservative seminaries within reasonable driving distance. *Of course* our church should be mentoring men for ministry. And just as certainly, many pastors labor in very small congregations where there just aren’t many in the next generation to mentor. My intention is not to create guilt for such men.
2. Many of us grew up in an environment that so emphasized a clergy-laity distinction that pastoral ministry seemed to be the only route for spiritual people, while everyone else lived with a second-class status. In reaction to that unhealthy environment, we may be slow to encourage a younger man to pursue vocational ministry because we do not want to repeat the errors of our forebears. We must be recognize, however, that God is still setting men apart for pastoral ministry and we as pastors play a significant role in training and assessing such men. We cannot overreact and consequently fail to reproduce a generation of godly men.
3. To this point, I have been blurring the line between mentoring men generally and mentoring vocational ministers specifically. That has been intentional. If we pastors are committed to

mentoring men in our assemblies, by default we will likely be mentoring men for vocational ministry. But regardless of whether a man chooses to pursue ministry for his full-time employment, the church needs male leaders—staff and lay—and we must recognize and own our responsibility to prepare these men for leadership.

And so our topic: Mentoring Men for Ministry. *Mentoring* has become a bit of a buzzword today. I'd like to begin by setting the concept of mentoring within its broader biblical context. And for that, we need to turn to Matthew 28 and review the Great Commission.

I. Mentoring and Discipleship (Matthew 28.16-20)

Christ's statement in vv. 18-20 has three distinct elements: v. 18 is (1), vv. 19-20a are (2), v. 20b is (3). The structure is A-B-A: indicative (what is true), imperative (our responsibility in light of what is true), indicative. This pattern forms the structure of this first point.

A. *Indicative: Christ Rules Everywhere* (18).

- From the beginning of his Gospel, Matthew has emphasized Christ's authority, his right to rule (1.1, 6-11)
- But how would he come to the throne? What would be the story between his genealogy in ch. 1 and this statement in ch. 28? Through a gradual ascension to the throne? No. His exaltation would come through his humiliation (e.g., 3.13-17 – humbly baptized by John; 4.1-10 – humbly defeating temptation by the power of the Spirit; 21.6 – even what we call his Triumphal Entry, the Scripture that he fulfills says, *Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey*)
- Sure, there are shades of his authority throughout the book (e.g., his authority expressed in the Sermon on the Mount), yet the trajectory through the gospel is ever downward, *to the very point of death, even death on a cross.*
- This is the Son of David? This is the King who has authority on earth to forgive sins? Dying a criminal's death?
- This is where you'd be left after reading 28 ½ out of 29 pages (that's in my little ESV). And then comes the last chapter and the first day of the week and the women going to the tomb and an angel seated on the stone and the words, *Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.*
- And you say, "What just happened?" And Paul tells you, *God raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come* (Ep 1.20-22). And God has *bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Ph 2.9-11).
- Thus Jesus says, *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Nothing lies outside my jurisdiction. No challenger can usurp my throne. Not even death itself can defeat me. It's all Mine.*

- **Transition:** Christ tells us the means by which the nations come.
- B. *Imperative: So disciple the nations (19-20a)*
- Command: *disciple all nations* (maqhteusate pa,nta ta. e;qnh)
 - *disciple* = one who learns by following; not simply *a convert*
 - *make disciples of all nations* (ESV, NASB, NET, CSB, NIV, NKJV)
 - We must not understand *of* as partitive (i.e., *from all the nations make disciples*).
 - *all nations* is the DO: i.e., *make all nations disciples*.
 - Christ's reasoning: "I rule everywhere, so make disciples everywhere. It's not just for Israel anymore."
 - The means by which Christ, to whom all authority everywhere is given, is served by all nations is the church!
 - Components: what this involves
 - *baptizing* (19b)
 - Baptism = the initiatory rite of the Christian church. We welcome professing believers into the church upon baptism.
 - *teaching* (20a) = "to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting" (BDAG, 1957.2.f.).
 - *all that I have commanded you*. This includes the content of Jesus' teaching in the gospels. But Acts teaches what Jesus continued to do, and the Epistles were written under the Spirit and came as a command of the Lord. "Thus in a larger sense, 'all that Jesus commanded' includes all of the NT" (Grudem, ST, 27).
 - Not *teaching them all* or *teaching them to know all that I have commanded you*, but *teaching them to do all that I have commanded you*.
 - Two implications:
 - For teachers/preachers of the Word, **application is vital**. Note Keller's statement from Dt 29.29 that the Bible is a covenant document (cp. Js 1.19). Therefore, application is not something we tack onto a sermon; it *is* the sermon.
 - **This cannot be done solely in a formal setting**. No teacher can trace every text to every application, nor every situation to every text. We need individual help in learning how to do all that Christ has commanded. Thus SGs, pastoral counseling, coffee with a friend.
 - Presupposition: *as you go* (19a) = wherever you go
 - Mild imperatival force, but not the central responsibility.
 - Not saying, *When you go to Haiti on a mission trip, make disciples*.
 - You're in the US right now? OK, *wherever you go here, make disciples*.
 - **Implication:** everyone you meet is a potential follower of Christ.
 - **Application:** where are you going? As you go, make disciples. As you go, wherever you go, always be discipling!

C. *Indicative: Christ is Present Everywhere* (20b).

- Statement: *behold I am with you always*.
 - This Sovereign-over-all supports us with his presence.
 - Emphasis is not so much on his presence as it is his assistance.
 - meta, = “in reference to supportiveness *be with someone, stand by, help someone*” (BDAG, 4637.A.2.a.g.b.).
 - How is this true? The Spirit of Christ is with us. Ro 8.9-10 equates the Spirit of Christ being in us with Christ himself being in us.
 - Perhaps explains why Matthew doesn’t record the ascension.
 - “That Jesus does not ascend is a fitting sign of his eternal presence: the risen Lord remains with his people” (Davies & Allison, 3.687).
 - Forms an inclusio with 1.23: $\nu\epsilon\mu\mu\alpha\nu\eta\iota, \lambda\epsilon\gamma\omega\ \eta\mu\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \sigma\epsilon\mu\epsilon\iota\omega\ \sigma\epsilon\mu\epsilon\iota\omega$.
- Implication: wherever you go, Christ is there.
 - Just as you cannot leave the authority of Christ, so too you cannot leave the presence of Christ. And notice how this statement transcends time and space: *I am with you* [no matter the location] *always* [no matter the time].
 - Adding to *the end of the age* shows that this statement wasn’t just for the original disciples, but the disciples of the disciples—all the way down to you and me. Jesus is with us.
- Application: You have great freedom to try—and fail!—to make others followers of Jesus. You’re not a one-man show; Christ himself is with you and his Spirit is in you to accomplish his will!

II. Mentoring and Ministry (2 Timothy 2.1-2)

A. *Prerequisites for Mentoring*

- Grace-empowered living: *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*
 - A mentor is not someone who has arrived. Far from it. He is someone who is still running the race, just a little bit further ahead.
 - *be strengthened* ($\epsilon\nu\nu\delta\nu\alpha\mu\omega$)
 - present = go on being strengthened
 - passive = the strength lies outside yourself
 - *the grace that is in Christ Jesus* points to the means of grace: Word, prayer, and fellowship
 - We who mentor others are still growing in our walk with Christ, and quite often we learn more from those we’re mentoring than we are able to impart to them.
- Teachable spirit: *the things you have heard from me*
 - Teachers do not have all the answers. Pastors do not have all the answers. Even though we are called to answer people’s questions, we ourselves are not the answer. We are subject to the Word, and our answers are only helpful as they reflect the clear teaching of Scripture.

B. *Aspects of Mentoring*

- Relationship
 - *commit* presumes a relationship. Consider how Paul himself fulfilled this command to Timothy. He had heard from others and had passed it on to Timothy. In the process, the two shared such a relationship that the mentor would regularly refer to the younger as his son (v. 1).
- Truth
 - Mentoring is not simply about building relationships; it's about building relationships for the purpose of advancing the truth of the gospel. Thus these relationships Timothy must cultivate center on *what he has heard from* Paul.
- Assessment
 - This aspect is introduced by the term *faithful*. The elder must carefully assess those he is mentoring, always assessing his growth in Christ, the direction of his heart, his inclinations, and so forth. The elder is shepherding, thinking, praying, talking, assessing.
 - This is why it's so important for you to consider the local church when you choose a seminary. Too many men think only in terms of who teaches what where, but never give any consideration to the group of men that will one day assess and ordain him for pastoral ministry. When you are sent out after seminary, you want the men who lay their hands on you to actually know you! So when you visit seminaries, take time to learn about what church you will become a part of—not just where you can serve, but (more importantly?) where you can be assessed.
- Goal
 - How will you know that you've "successfully" mentored someone? When they *are able to teach others also*. That's the goal: not simply for the one you're mentoring to know the truth, but for them to know it so well that they are mentoring others.

C. *Application of Mentoring*

- Learn to look at everyone as a potential follower of Christ.
- Spend increasing amounts of time with decreasing numbers of people.
 - Christ's methods included public teaching and private instruction.
 - But he didn't spend equal time with everyone. His disciples were simply *with* him; that's why they were called *followers*.
- **Illustration:** concentric circles; jot down your roles (closest friend/spouse, family, close friends, fellow church members [SG/SS/ministries], co-workers, neighbors)
 - Are there any unbelievers on your paper? where do they fit in?
 - Envision your chart in 3D, with the circles/cylinders increasing in height as you move to the center. Represents time to invest.
- **Illustration** of Seth Rone (who was being ordained in Chattanooga, TN that very day)
- You must prioritize people and help them learn to follow Christ.

Conclusion

I love to study: the languages, learning new things, finding answers to difficult questions. And I love to preach: the praying, the planning, the nerves, watching the Spirit use the Word to change lives. But the one thing that I enjoy far more than I expected has been the opportunity to spend time with a few younger men, walk with them, teach them, learn from them, and shepherd them. If you haven't experienced the joy of sharing your lives with a younger man whom you are mentoring—or, for that matter, with an older man who is mentoring you—I would encourage you to start praying that our Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, would bring such a man into your life.

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