



Paul Our Mentor

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1

Introduction:

A mentor is defined as *“an experienced and trusted adviser; one who trains another, especially a younger colleague.”*

The Thesaurus has synonyms for mentor like *“counselor, guide, tutor, teacher, advisor, supporter, consultant, confidant.”*

“Remember that mentor leadership is all about serving. Jesus said, 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.' *Tony Dungy “The Mentor Leader”*

“One of the greatest values of mentors is the ability to see ahead what others cannot see and to help them navigate a course to their destination.”
John C. Maxwell

"A mentor is not
someone who walks
ahead of you to show
you how they did it. A
mentor walks alongside
you to show you what
you can do."

If you want to know the value of mentoring, simply examine very carefully the three-year ministry of Jesus Christ with His apostles. He totally dedicated

Himself to the training of these few men to take the gospel into all the world. No passage summarizes that relationship of mentoring better than Matthew 20:25-28. As these 12 men were arguing as to who would be greatest in the kingdom, Jesus does this:

*"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as **the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**"*

Paul As A Mentoree

Paul became an apostle after Jesus had already gone back to heaven. But God provided him with a mentor in Barnabas. For a period of time we read of the two men with this sequence:

Ac 11:30 Barnabas and Saul.

Ac 12:25 Barnabas and Saul

Ac 13:2 Barnabas and Saul

Ac 13:7 Barnabas and Saul

But then something interesting happened. As Paul matured there came a shift in leadership and the inspired writer Luke began saying:

Ac 13:43 Paul and Barnabas

Ac 13:46 Paul and Barnabas

Ac 13:50 Paul and Barnabas

Ac 15:2 Paul and Barnabas

Ac 15:35 Paul and Barnabas

Barnabas was more than willing to play second fiddle to the talented Paul. His role was to take this new convert and bring him along until he was ready to break out and become a great leader in the young church.

As the years progressed the apostle Paul truly understood the value of mentoring those who would then take up his mantle and carry on the Lord's work after he was gone. His mentoring of Timothy, Titus, Trophimus, Epaphroditus, Philemon, and so many others is legendary. Paul went from being mentored to becoming the ultimate Mentor Leader.

Paul As Our Mentor

That leads me to my sermon series for this year of 2018. I have set aside the next 12 months to going deeply into the life of this great Christian leader in order to allow him to become my mentor too. While it is true that I cannot personally and physically walk alongside Paul to let him counsel, tutor and

become my confidant, I believe it is possible through his writings to get into his head and heart and learn how to become a stronger disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit has seen fit to leave us so much information about this man through the writings of Luke (i.e. the book of Acts), along with Paul's own 13 known epistles (some believe he also wrote a 14th letter – Hebrews). These writings allow us to dig deep into this man's faith and footsteps.

1. We can know what he knew.
2. We can do what he did.
3. We can go where he went.

We Can Know What He Knew

Ephesians 3:1-4

*"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles -- if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, **when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ**)"*

This passage clearly tells us we can know what Paul knew. He did not keep secret the great revelations given to him by God. Great topics like Faith. Grace. Redemption. Justification. Sanctification. Unity. Fellowship.

Yes, it is true, what Peter said about some of Paul's writings:

*"... as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also **in all his epistles**, speaking in them of these things, in which are **some things hard to understand**, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures"* (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Even though "some things" in his epistles were "hard to understand," that did not mean they were impossible to understand. It simply meant that those who were "untaught and unstable" would "twist" them to say something he never meant. It would "be to their own destruction."

Instead, Paul wrote so that the "worker" of scripture could "rightly divide the word of truth."

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

If you are willing to apply yourself to diligent Bible study, you can then know what Paul knew. Do you? If not, are you now willing to learn?

We Can Do What He Did

A mentor not only will tell you what he knows, hoping you will learn it too, but he will go beyond the all-too-familiar role models who say, “Do as I say, not as I do.” He will ask you to come alongside and watch him closely, encouraging you to “Do as I say, *and* as I do.” He will gladly advise you to “Listen and learn,” but then also add “Watch and learn.”

The poem by “The People’s Poet” - Edgar Guest - says it very well:

I'D RATHER SEE A SERMON

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear;
And the best of all preachers are the men who live their creeds,
For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done;
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.
And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.

For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give,
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

Paul was not afraid to put himself in the lead and encourage others to follow. It is staggering how many times in his letters he begs others to examine his life under a microscope and then step into his footprints to follow his example:

1 Corinthians 4:16 “Therefore I urge you, ***imitate me***.

1 Corinthians 11:1 “***Imitate me*** just as I also imitate Christ.”

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be ***imitators of God*** as dear children.

Philippians 3:17 Brethren, join in ***following my example***, and note those who so walk, as ***you have us for a pattern***.

Philippians 4:9 “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, ***these do***, and the God of peace will be with you.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 “And you became ***followers of us*** and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became ***examples*** to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

2 Thessalonians 3:7 “For you yourselves know how you ought to ***follow us***, ... 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves ***an example*** of how you should ***follow us***.

1 Timothy 1:16 “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, **that in me** first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, **as a pattern** to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.

If Paul was the author of Hebrews too, then that list continues with these:

Hebrews 6:12 “that you do not become sluggish, but **imitate** those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Hebrews 13:7 “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, **whose faith follow**, considering the outcome of their conduct.

When Paul told the Corinthians to “*imitate me*” (I Cor. 4:6), he followed that up with this caveat: “*Imitate me, as I imitate Christ.*” Paul was the original WWJD, nearly 2000 years ahead of the trend-setters who wear wrist bands, jewelry, tee-shirts and other items to ask “**What Would Jesus Do?**” The apostle made it his life’s mission to fully and completely know everything possible about his Savior. Listen to how he phrased it:

Philippians 3:7-11 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

After reading that powerful mission statement, is there any doubt in your mind what Paul thought about when he woke up each morning, what he talked about during his day, and what were his last thoughts as he drifted off to sleep? The man ate, slept, and breathed Jesus Christ. In fact, if you would care to look it up in your Bible concordance or software program, search how many times Paul combined the words “**Lord ... Jesus ... Christ**” when he spoke of Him. I’ll give you a hint. From Romans through Philemon (all 13 epistles) he combined those three words 89 times! That doesn’t include the 5 times I can count it in his sermons in the book of Acts. For example, just in the first chapter of I Corinthians he used it six times:

1:2 in *Christ Jesus ... Jesus Christ our Lord*

1:3 the *Lord Jesus Christ...*

1:7 our *Lord Jesus Christ ...*

1:8 our *Lord Jesus Christ.*

1:9 *Jesus Christ our Lord.*

1:10 our *Lord Jesus Christ, ...*

Do you begin to see a trend? Paul could barely open his mouth or pick up a pen to write without bursting into praise about Jesus right out of the box:

1 Thessalonians 1:1 “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ... 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father”

2 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, 2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.”

He could not be content just to say “Jesus,” he had to pour out every title worthy of praise he could use. If we are to “imitate” Paul, then we need to saturate our minds and hearts with “our Lord Jesus Christ” too.

We Can Go Where He Went

This third point is almost automatic. If we come to know what Paul knew. If we then do what Paul did. Then it is a certainty we will then go where Paul went. And I doubt there is anyone who would dare question the eternal destiny of this great soldier of the cross. He confidently said as he faced martyrdom:

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Clearly, Paul will be in heaven. And he has not only told us how to get there, but he has shown us the way. In fact, let him describe our conclusion to this lesson on mentoring with Paul’s own words:

*“Brethren, join in following my **example**, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a **pattern**... 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”* (Philippians 3:17-21)

Conclusion:

Take up Paul's invitation to follow the leader. That is, to follow him. From the time of his conversion until the day of his death he determined to fill his mind and heart with the life of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:9 summarizes this lesson perfectly:

“The things which you **learned** and **received** and **heard** and **saw** in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Sermon by Rick Lanning Roanoke church of Christ September 21, 2018