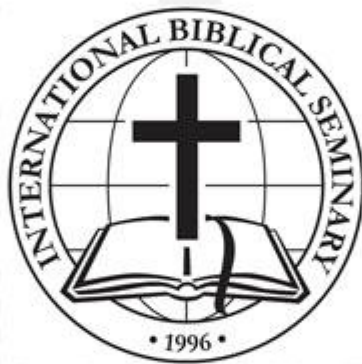


Mentor

One on One



Rev. Peter Chou, PhD
President, IBS

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IBS

International Biblical Seminary--Bivocational Ministry.

Chapter 11:

From mentee to mentor

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Chapter Eleven: From mentee to mentor

“I wish I could mentor the whole church;” doesn’t everyone? But that would be impossible, impractical and ineffective. There is a tendency that a good mentor would want to do more; after all, he is doing what he does well, isn’t it? But, I say impossible, because no one would have the physical, mental and spiritual energy to mentor the whole church unless the church is very small or stagnant; why would anyone kill himself in doing all things? He might have started to mentor when he realized he could not run as a Jack of all trades in the ‘church business.’ He took somebody’s advice and now he is successful as a mentor; so he tries to do it again and again; and eventually kills himself, again; right? Yah, right! Does that make sense? I say it is impractical, too. If someone had the energy to do it all, others will become bystanders, again. When this happened, it effectively killed the momentum and the perpetuity of mentoring. Sometimes, doing less is more.

It is also ineffective, for there is a time factor involved. We all know the simple math: addition and multiplication. Suppose there is a certain church, one of whose members, A is a gifted soul winner and he does it very diligently, brings one new believer to the church every week. In a year the church will add about 50 people; that is, everybody he brought in stayed. In another church, there is a lesser gifted but smarter soul winner B; he develops the buddy system, and he mentors the new believer C while he wins souls. In 5 weeks, he wins one new Christian D but he also sees his mentee C is interested to get involved in evangelism. Now B lets C loose to do the job B has taught C to do; meanwhile B uses the opportunity to mentor D while evangelizing others. What do you think? Which church grows faster in a year? In 2 years? You do the math. Besides, which church do you think has a better chance of keeping newcomers? Furthermore, if one of these ‘lesser evangelists’, leading a person E to the Lord and hits a jackpot, that it turns out E is just as gifted as A; then, what will it be? And why do we limit mentoring only to evangelism? Shouldn’t it be in caring system, too? As well as in teaching plan?

To mentor the whole church—not by oneself, the most important thing is to maintain the momentum; that every one being mentored continues on to mentor others. A good mentor may mentor many, but a smart mentor encourages and helps his mentees to mentor others. Look at what Paul taught Timothy in 2 Tim 2:2; Paul was a smart mentor and he taught Timothy to be smart, too. There are four generations: Paul, Timothy, reliable men, and others. The most important word is ‘entrust’ in this passage; but to entrust . . . , how? I don’t think anybody would dispute that Paul mentored Timothy; I think we can assume Timothy also had mentored the reliable ones, and now Paul taught Timothy to let them loose to teach others. To say that Paul wanted Timothy to let loose his down line to teach others, I think closely captures Paul’s original intent. So, to ‘entrust’ is necessarily to let loose; which means not only to teach the contents but to perpetuate the process. I think it is vitally important for mentors

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to let the mentees know that we expect them to become mentors after they have learned well.

I don't know about other cultures, but I find that in our culture 'to entrust' poses the greatest difficulty in the chain of mentor system. We always worry that the people we train are not good enough. If we are Timothy, our problem, or our excuse, is not able to find the reliable men. What then will we do? The problem may be with us, not them; perhaps we have confused reliability with ability. Paul asked Timothy to entrust the reliable (faithful, in some other translations); he did say "qualified to teach" but that qualification came from their reliability. If we look at Paul and Timothy; are they of same caliber? Hardly; we know Timothy had a lot of natural limitations but he was reliable and Paul trusted him. The 'reliable men' may not be as good but they will carry the process of mentoring the best they can. I think a little play of words may help to clear our mind for basic concepts: suppose we call a mentee 'good' if he is capable, retaining good knowledge of what his mentor taught him; and another 'well' mentored when he remembers to carry out the order of mentoring others. Which one do you prefer? The 'good' one or the one 'well' mentored? If we use 'good' in association with contents and 'well' to describe the process; which is more important? It is highly possible that we teach somebody and he is 'good,' but we do not teach him 'well.'

Certainly, we are not the first to have discovered this in the Bible; instead, in church history the concept of mentoring, or sometimes called one on one method, was discovered and practiced from time to time; but the effectiveness or result was only when the chain continued. Every generation had to learn the skills themselves. A new mentor has to learn how to mentor by doing it too; head knowledge is never true knowledge, especially when mentoring is concerned. I suppose, therefore, until we see to it that our mentee begins to mentor others, our job is not done. A critical moment is when the mentor knows and turns loose the mentee to become a new mentor. Do not stop at yourself and break the chain. My friend, move on; develop others to be mentors.

Not long ago, I heard a church planter said, his job was "to plant a church to plant churches." You see, he is not just planting churches, he is mentoring church planting. Church planting may be a much more elaborated process but the concept of mentoring holds; that is, if we can break down the essentials of church operation into smaller, manageable mentoring tasks. In fact, the whole idea of mentoring the spiritual life, such as in this book, is a part of desire to build a church after God's heart. In 1994-95, when I was in my D Min program, and taking a course on church growth, I had a conversation with my professor. I was increasingly dissatisfied with then the prevailing teaching of strategy and methodology that only caters to one dimensional growth, the size of the church, as if we have a good church when the number of Sunday attendants climbs upward. [I am certainly very glad that now we understand that church health is more important than church size.]

After that conversation the thought lingered, although I skipped D Min and entered a PhD program

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later. I saw the need of a balanced three dimensional growth, and I dubbed it ETC; E for evangelism, T for teaching (or training) and C for Caring. I believe these are the essentials of church growth and it is designed to start with evangelism. If you notice, a few paragraphs before in this chapter I purposely used evangelism as an illustration for mentoring process: B taking C along while sharing gospel with D, mentoring C to be an evangelist, etc. However, before you can mentor somebody you need to develop a relationship, and that is where caring comes to play. New Christians have basic needs and caring seems to me the easiest approach to any relation. In the caring process mentoring happens naturally; and before long you find yourself showing him how to read the Bible devotionally and praying with him. Caring can be mentored, so are evangelism and teaching. These are the three basic ministries any and every church must establish. If the three ministries, the orientation of giftedness dictates how a person may choose to enter and is most effective. Few people have all gifts, so we need to serve together as a team. The more we understand our own limitedness the more we are willing to serve with diverse gifts. The more we recognize other's gifts the more we become humble. The more we learn to work with others, with growing humility along the way, the more we will become a team. Isn't it nice that in the church some are evangelists, some are meant to be teachers and some are caregivers. A church with mentoring program will be a growing church; a church with strong mentoring programs will show her strength in time; and a church with balanced comprehensive mentoring programs will be a growing, strong, balanced church.

These three things, evangelism, caring and teaching can be individually mentored, in addition, there are corporal activities in the church, such as church worship and administration skills. Can these things be mentored? Definitely! Sunday worship has long been an emblem of Christianity but few newcomers are taught beforehand what is going on. Invited, they are ushered in and sit down; then they observe and learn. But this is exactly what mentoring is—observation, imitation, practice, etc. If people clap hands, they clap; if Christians close eyes to pray, they close eyes; if people chat before meeting, during sermon, and in fellowship time after worship, they talk before meeting, in the sermon, and afterwards. Culture, they follow a culture. It is very common that a new comer arrives at the meeting on time only to find out the rest of the regular members tardy; guess what? They come late the next week. They are mentored, and very quickly. We need to mentor a good culture positively; reinforcing what is desired.

But church is more than the outward things; there is a spiritual content which must come through, in order to be a ministry. Usually in Sunday Worship, the most acutely felt, whether they are spiritual or not are music and sermon. I am still at odds with the modern day concept of music worship. We have been so heavily influenced by rock concerts that the PA system drowns out the congregation, as if the louder the blast the more spiritual. I had a young man approaching me and sneered, that "You grownups don't know worship." Of course, you understand that he rejected classical music. I have seen a few, not many but a few, good worship leaders in recent days, but a worship leader still has to

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be a worshiper to lead the congregational worship—be it the traditional music or the contemporary. How do you teach or mentor a worship leader? Musically, of course; but the most important is the person. We have to mentor a worshiper; that is, his life education—the very definition of mentoring.

The interesting thing about music is that most musicians are mentored, if he/she shows some kind of talent when they were young. They are taught; Christians or non-Christians alike that music is not just a technique, it must come out from the heart; it is a business of the heart. For Christians the requirement is added with a spiritual dimension that he/she must be in tune with God—and that is the whole being, all the time. Abiding in Christ is the mandate. I am a musician and I know how hard it is to hide in Him. Music is a show business—showing your talents, your charisma, your techniques, your creativity, etc. It is very charming if you are good enough to be in this enchanted business; but very hard not to show off yourself when you perform. Ministry is another business. I always treat the musicians who would serve in church with leniency, even if they are a little tacky; but a music minister is of a different standard. Too many musicians are filling in as music ministers in the church, thinking they are serving God with their talents. People may be impressed with the talents, but is God pleased with the life? I know; I may be too critical but at least I find echoes in many serious music ministers. We struggle while we perform to serve; we struggle while we serve by performance.

I do not want to overlook the part of mentoring a preacher on his preaching; I have been teaching Homiletics in seminaries for many years. And I believe in training ‘lay preachers,’ a Wesleyan term. I always told my students that a preacher is only as good (or as bad) as his last sermon and there is no expert on preaching. We must strive to improve by way of peer mentoring—after you leave seminary. A preacher must be the harshest criticizer of his own sermon in order to improve, but his spouse or his close confidants can help with constructive criticism. Preaching is also a matter of heart, and spirit. Anybody can preach a good sermon from time to time, but a true servant preaches with his life—all the time, all his life.

These are the highlights in this chapter:

- There is a natural tendency that a good mentor would want to do it all; but that would be impossible, impractical and ineffective. Sometimes, doing less is more.
- To mentor the whole church—not by oneself, the most important thing is to keep it going; that every one being mentored continues to mentor others. Don’t break the momentum.
- Paul in 2 Tim 2:2 taught Timothy to perpetuate mentoring for four generations, and Paul taught Timothy to entrust the reliable ones to teach others; reliability is more important than ability.
- A good mentor may mentor many, but a smart mentor helps his mentees to mentor others. A

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mentor's job is not done until he sees to it that his mentee begins to mentor others.

- Mentoring is not limit only to spiritual life; it's good for developing ministries.
- Church growth should not be one dimensional—the size of the church or the number of Sunday attendants. Nowadays we understand that church health is more important than church size.
- We need a balanced three dimensional growth, or ETC; E for evangelism, T for teaching (or training) and C for Caring. These are the essentials of church growth
- Caring, evangelism and teaching are the three basic ministries any and every church must establish; the giftedness of a person decides which is the most effective ministry he should enter
- Few people have all gifts, so we need to serve together as a team. The more we learn to work with others, with growing humility, the more we become a team.
- A church with balanced comprehensive mentoring programs will be a growing, strong, balanced church
- Church worship can also be mentored. We 'mentor' the newcomers unknowingly by setting (sometimes bad) examples
- A worship leader has to be a worshiper first, before he/she leads the congregational to worship; that is, his/here, not his/her music skill defines his/her act of worship
- Musicians are usually mentored; music is not just a technique, it must come out from the heart
- There is a great temptation to show off yourself in music when you perform; but a music minister learns to abide (hide) in Christ
- People may be impressed with the talents of a performer, but God cares more of the life of a worshiper
- A preacher must be the harshest criticizer of his own sermon in order to improve, but his spouse or his close confidants can help with constructive criticism.
- Preaching is also a matter of heart, and spirit. Anybody can preach a good sermon from time to time, but a true servant preaches with his life—all the time, all his life.

Let us take on these questions with interesting discussions:

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1. In the context of this chapter, why is “Sometimes, doing less is more.”?
2. Let’s talk about the ‘time factor’ and generations: Do some math. Using Jacob’s story, and find out how his sons reproduce; in how many generations, and how many sons each has, did his household increase to 600,000 men in Egypt?
3. If you plant a church from scratch, and you can mentor 2 people in 3 years: How long will you have a church of about 240, if all mentees become mentors in 3 years? How many have you personally trained? If you choose 10 elders, 25 deacons out of the 240, how many years have they been serving already?
4. Why is letting go difficult, once mentoring take place? How does a mentor know the time to let go?
5. Why is it important to mentor the contents as well as the process? What is the best time to let the mentees know that you expect them to become mentors?
6. Why is teaching the concept of perpetuity of mentorship more important than the contents?
7. What will happen to a ‘one dimensional’ church if it keeps growing in number only?
8. A 3-D church in ETC is a healthy church; why? What are the limitations of growth?
9. What is your gift mix? What kind of ministry do you think you fit in best? Evangelism? Caring? Teaching? You need a team: what kind of team members you are looking to compliment you?
10. How do you change the bad church culture of people habitual late to worship on Sundays?
11. Are you willing to serve as a worship leader? Or preach a sermon? Why and why not?

Action Items:

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