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It Takes a Man to Teach a Man How to Be a Man

Luke 8:14-15, Malachi 4:6, Luke 1:17, 2 Timothy 2:2

Good morning, men. Do you think a woman can mentor a man? Do you think a woman can raise a godly man or disciple a man? Certainly to a point. Mothers can make an investment in their children, but picture this: “Hi. I’m your mother and I’m going to teach you how to be a man. Let’s go shopping now we’ll pick out something cute to wear to school.”

It takes a man to teach a man how to be a man. That is the title of the message today. It takes a man to teach a man how to be a man.

The first thing we will look at is how this man problem has gotten so out of hand. The vast majority of men in America are in trouble. I would estimate that 90% of men lead lukewarm, stagnant, often defeated lives and they hate it. The collateral damage for this is staggering.

This email I received from a friend sums it up. He told me about how his daughter stopped in to see her daughter at school. She saw the teacher sitting in stunned silence. The teacher explained that she had asked the class what they wanted for Christmas. Reading from his email, “These 8-year-olds didn’t mention video games, dolls, toys, or a trip to Disney World. Instead, their answers were like this: ‘I hope my parents don’t get a divorce.’ ‘I want my daddy to come back home.’ ‘I want to see my mommy smile. Maybe if my daddy came back she would smile again.’ ‘I want my family back together again.’ ‘I want my parents to stop yelling at each other.’”

No wonder this teacher was stunned and perplexed. My friend goes on. “These were 8-year-old children in Queens, New York. They didn’t want gifts for themselves. They wanted a family with a mommy and daddy that love each other. How do we solve this problem?” How do we solve this problem, men?

When elephants began to overpopulate in the Kruger National Park in South Africa, government officials decided brilliantly that they would kill the adults, and then take the orphaned children and distribute them to different parks around South Africa. These orphaned young elephants grew up, but they did not see any normal adult behavior being exhibited. When the young male bulls became teenagers and their testosterone spiked their behavior became aggressive. In fact, these young bulls savagely killed 36 rhinos. A Park Forest ranger said that he observed one elephant knocking over a rhino trampling it and then taking his tusk and spearing it through the middle of his chest and killing it.

Then someone had the idea to import six mature bulls into this one park, and after that not a single rhino was killed in that park ever again because the adult bull elephants taught the young bull elephants what it meant to be a man.

That is how we solve this problem. The big idea today is this: **it takes a man to teach a man how to be a man.**

THE “MEN PROBLEM” HAS GOTTEN OUT OF HAND

We want to look at the solution. There is a non-negotiable solution for how men teach men how to be men. Turn to Luke 8:14.

I want to read two verses here. I want you to see that Jesus draws a contrast between two ways of life. Verse 14: “The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.”

Contrast that with verse 15: “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

Jesus draws a very distinct contrast between two ways of life. The only really non-negotiable in this formula is the Word of God. If it takes a man to teach a man to be a man and you base it on the Word of God you are talking about Christian mentoring. Jesus draws a distinction and the non-negotiable solution is that mentoring men is built around the Word of God. Everything else is open to your imagination.

I will tell you a few stories. I have always been in one-on-one relationships with guys that are a generation older than me. When I was 28 years old I started having lunch with Ken Mohr. Every week for 32 years we had lunch and he was 30 years older than me. When Ken died a couple of years ago I started meeting with my father-in law. By Providence, he had moved to Orlando and I started meeting with him. I got a replacement. I am still meeting with someone from my parents’ generation.

How many of you are in some kind of a mentoring relationship with someone more mature than you? A lot of you are. Beautiful. That is part of God’s order of things.

It is important to understand that parenting is mentoring that starts at home. Parenting is foundational to mentoring. We previously looked at Psalm 78 in this series that shows that there is to be an intergenerational transfer of spiritual wealth from one generation to the next. Deuteronomy 6 talks about how you should teach your children along the way the things you learned from your forbears.

Parenting is the foundation of mentoring. Mentoring starts at home. But not all mentoring can be done at home. Let me give you an example. My son would tell you that I did a good job mentoring him as a man and what it means to be a man. When he became an adult and got into business he needed a different kind of mentoring. I had never mentored him in business. It turned out he asked me if I would be his business mentor and I said yes. We would exchange phone calls and emails. It was very situational.

Mentoring is very situational. The best mentoring is not theoretical. I am giving you theoretical mentoring here because I am talking to you as a group.

There is an inverse relationship between the depth of the impact and the size of the group. The bigger the group, the less the impact. The smaller the group, the deeper the impact. At your tables there is a much bigger impact with each other than I will ever have on you. You have a much deep impact on each

other than I will ever have on you. If you want a profoundly deep impact get with someone one-on-one. There are things you will talk about one-on-one you will never say in a small group. There is an inverse relationship.

Let's go back to John. John asked me if I would be his bus mentor. I took that on. We were having this great business mentoring relationship. Then I could see he was beginning to outgrow what I could offer him in his particular field. So he started looking around and found a Realtor in Phoenix who had a model and so he began to ask that man if he would be a mentor. I encouraged him to do that. Part of mentoring is encouraging your mentee to move on.

When my son was out of our home and no longer under my leadership and guidance in terms of teaching him how to be a man, he found a man in Huntsville, Alabama. He got into a very small group with two or three other guys, and this man is now teaching my son the spiritual truths over again that I taught him as a young man; but now they mean a whole different thing to him now that he is a man and has his own family.

When you are parenting a lot of your parenting is theoretical, but it is a foundation. When a man gets into the world himself, the foundation is there but he also needs another man who will come alongside him and teach him to deal with the exact situations that he has.

How many of you have mentored another man? Let me see your hands. So many of you have already done this so you know what it is to pour your life into someone else.

THE NON-NEGOTIABLE SOLUTION

Here are some principles I want to give to you. There is a non-negotiable solution. Everything else is up to your imagination. Principle: There is no formula. There is no formula for mentoring. There is no perfect way to do mentoring. Mentoring can be episodic. It could be like a one-shot deal. How many times have you had a problem and got advice from someone and then you never talk with them ever again? Yet they gave you exactly the advice you needed for that situation.

Sometimes the people who are mentoring us do not even know they are doing it. I remember following around Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, for 2 ½ years when we were raising money in Florida. I was just observing the way he lived his life. For example, I saw that every time somebody who did not know Jesus Christ crossed his path, Bill Bright would stop whatever he was doing and talk to that person about the gospel about Jesus.

I was perplexed because it seems like that was all he ever did. Then it dawned on me that God brought a continual stream of men who needed Jesus into his path because He knew Bill Bright would be faithful to share his faith with those people. I said I want to be like that.

I wish I could tell you today that I was like Bill Bright. I am not like him, but I do know I get a lot more chances to share the gospel because God knows if He does put someone in my life I will talk to them about Jesus.

How about you? Do you have a formula? Do you have a system? In 1997 I started having lunch and going to the movies with Jim Siebert. It is a friendship. Ken Mohr and I had a friendship, and he was the bull elephant and I was the young teenage elephant. Just by watching how he did life I learned how to do life as an adult man.

Mentoring relationships go up and down. Jim is older than I am. We are friends but I was more mature spiritually than Jim. Those times, in addition to friendship, became mentoring times. He would have issues or questions, and he would bring up situational things and he would ask about them. Because I had the non-negotiable solution—the Word of God—I would simply tell him what the word of God said.

I have been mentored so many other ways too. Sometimes you do not even have to have another person to get mentored.

I have been mentored through reading books and learning about how other people have handled their life situations. Not only biographies, but how-to books and Christian Living books have been extremely helpful.

Mentoring is very situational. There is no formula for it. You might meet with someone only once or you might meet with someone like I did for thirty two years.

The second principle is it takes a long time to make a disciple. You may only be with somebody for two or three weeks, but you need to understand that it takes a long time to make a disciple. If you can you should be giving the mentees that you have the vision that it takes a long time.

The most powerful way to actually see lifelong change is to be in long-term relationships with the same people instead of bouncing around from group to group, or from church to church, as some people do. People who do that do not grow because they get so far with one group and then the group starts to get to know them. They get to a point where they will have to be real, vulnerable and truthful with a group; rather than do that, they skip out and go to a new group where they can remain anonymous. That is not mentoring. That is not discipleship.

Another principle is disciples cannot be mass produced. I already told you that the depth of impact is inverse to the size of the group; and disciples can't be mass produced simply means that. As much as I would like to think I could disciple you in this context as well as you guys who do the online Bible study, I cannot do that. I can give you the theoretical framework by which you can process with somebody, be mentored and become a disciple. But you are not going to get disciplined just listening to me.

The bigger the church the more the pastor understands he needs to have his people in small groups.

Did you know this? The biggest churches are the smallest churches. The churches that have the most people have cell groups and small groups. Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Church in New York City, says that if you are not part of a small group you are not part of the church. If you come to the large meeting but are not in a small group you are not really part of the church. You need to be in small groups because disciples cannot be mass produced.

Being mentored is not formulaic, but it does help to be intentional. In other words, when the park rangers brought the six bulls into the park, they were being intentional. Getting the older bulls with the younger bulls was intentional, and that is what helped the bulls. That is what helped the young aggressive males settle down. That is because **it takes a man to teach a man how to be a man**, and that is the big idea today. You have to know what a man is to teach another guy what it means to be a man.

What it means to be a man we have one of our table leaders we had breakfast with this week. When he was 12 he had a conversion experience and he grew up from that time on as a believer. But he said it was not until he turned 20 that his faith came alive when an older Christian took him under his wing and told him what it meant to be how to walk the Christ. Billy Sunday once said you can sit in church but sitting in a church will not make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage will make you a car. Being in church is not the answer. Being involved with someone in a one-on-one or a small group relationship where you can have the opportunity to process life's situations against the non-negotiable solution of the Word of God. That is the power in mentoring.

CONNECTING PAULS AND TIMOTHYS

Finally, let's talk about connecting Pauls and Timothys. Many men do not want to be disciple, but who is responsible for those who do?

Men, I have a bad indictment of us. We are the "they" whose fault this is. "They" should have done this. "They" should have done that. "They" did not do that. This is the result. We are the "theys" whose fault this is.

I will tell you what I think is the crux of the problem. How many men never get asked if they would like to spend some time together to be mentored?

I have a few questions for you. Raise your hands if you are currently in some kind of a mentoring relationship. That is beautiful.

How many of you feel qualified to be a mentor of someone else? There are quite a few of you. Raise your hand if you feel you need to be mentored yourself. In a few minutes I will ask you guys who are ready to do some mentoring to connect with one of these guys who want to be mentored and take a three-week challenge.

It takes a long time to make a disciple, but you cannot violate the process of building relationships either. You cannot say, "Hey, would you be willing to meet with me for the rest of your life, and let me mentor you?"

Every man needs a Paul and every man needs a Timothy. Every man in this room should have someone who is mentoring them. Every man in this room should have someone they are mentoring, so there is a simultaneous thing going on. Remember I said I always had someone older than me who is my mentor, and I have others who I have been mentoring.

I have been mentoring a 28-year-old man for the last few months. I have learned a lot more from it than he has, I am sure. It has been fantastic.

I would like to challenge you to get together for three weeks just to get to know each other. You can share your testimonies with each other, and where you are in your spiritual journey. You can find out if you have any common interests. By the way, I have found that mentoring works best when there is some sort of a shared common interest. That may or may not happen in this experiment, but I am willing to trust the Holy Spirit to orchestrate this. Are you willing to trust the Holy Spirit to orchestrate this too?

Here is what I will do. If you need and/or want to be mentored stand up, and those who said they are ready to do some mentoring pair off with one of these guys. Think of it as building a friendship.

I have not been able to shake this idea all week long. We need to be proactive and trust the Holy Spirit. I had 40-50 guys when we asked this question a few weeks ago raise their hands who said they were ready to mentor somebody. Everybody pair off now.

I am not sure what just happened but I do know this – I would rather be imperfect in actuality than perfect in potentiality. I would rather do something and do it wrong than do nothing and do it right. When I did my Ph.D. I knew I would not be able to put 100% of my time into it, but I would rather have 70% of a good education than 100% of no education. That is what we are doing – taking baby steps and hopefully casting a vision for everybody that this is something that is really important. When I said men in America are in trouble, it is not just theoretical trouble, it is that our prisons are exploding and every week there is some kind of a mass murder going on in our schools, and there are all of these incredible problems that were not there a few decades ago.

Can I hypothesize? There are just not enough bull elephants. **The big idea today: it takes a man to teach a man how to be a man.** Let's pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we love You. We do want to serve You. We probably stepped on some toes this morning. Father, would you take whatever has happened here this morning, and would You use it for Your glory and for Your praise?

I pray that also as this goes out over the Internet, too, that there would be little pockets of men all around this country who would catch the vision. If it is going to happen, it is going to take the bull elephants in the cities to show the young, teenaged bull elephants what it takes to be men. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.