



BIBLICAL MENTORSHIP

IMPACT MENTORSHIP
EQUIPPING SESSION

FACILITATOR MANUAL



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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Biblical Mentorship

BY DR. CARLA SUNBERG

Years ago, I found a quote that my father, Dr. Jerald Johnson, had used to reflect his thoughts on leadership. I've taken them and used them as my own. This came from an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal by United Technologies Corporation of Hartford, CT:

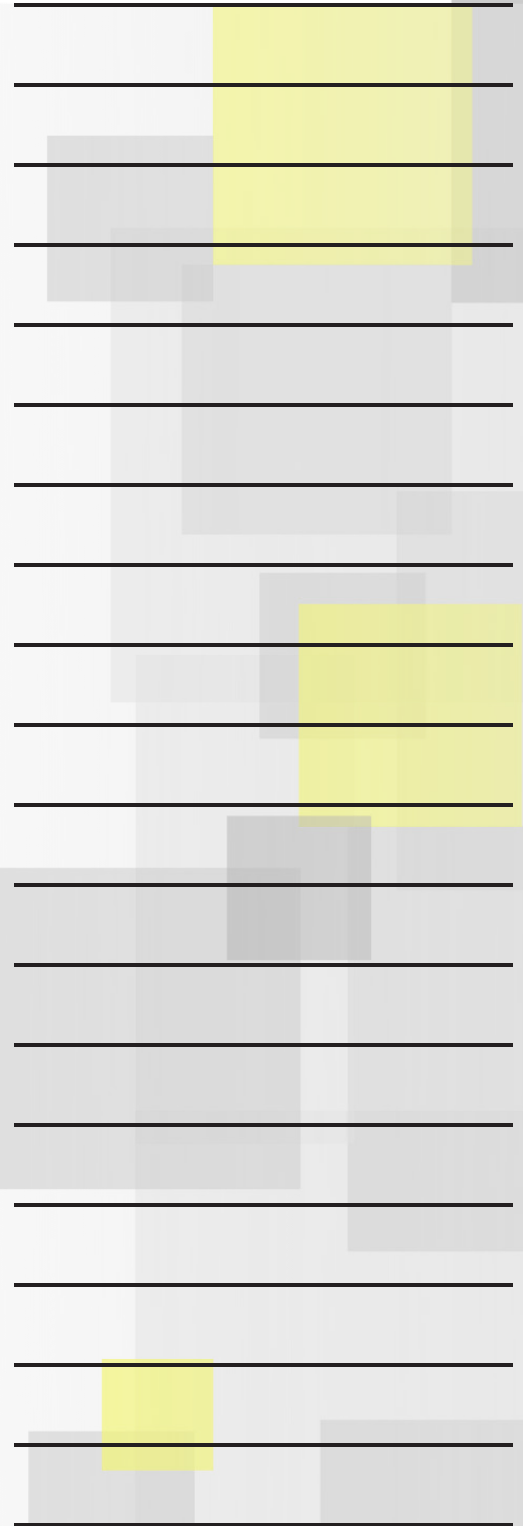
"People don't want to be managed. They want to be led. Whoever heard of a world manager? World leader, yes. Educational leader. Political leader. Religious leader. Scout leader. Community leader. Labor leader. Business leader. They lead. They don't manage. The carrot always wins over the stick. Ask your horse. You can lead your horse to water, but you can't manage him to drink. If you want to manage somebody, manage yourself. Do that well and you'll be ready to stop managing and start leading."

It's the final two sentences that grip me. The only way that leaders can lead, is to first begin by managing their own personal life. We must take this seriously because the church currently has a credibility problem. This is the gap that's created when people claim that they are followers of Christ, even proclaiming the story of God, but they fail, in their own lives to live out the ethical commands of Christ. The way in which I live my life speaks volumes about the faith which I embrace.

We all know our mission statement is, "To make Christlike disciples in the nations." The goal of a Christ-follower is to become as much like Christ as possible. We should be on a journey in which we are transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. This means that if we are going to be leaders, we must first ask ourselves whether we are reflecting Christ in this world.

This is where we begin to understand that we find Biblical mentorship in every story of the Bible. We go to the Scriptures and we ask God to reveal to these individuals from the past who can lead us into the future.

We are currently living in a time of great challenge, and one of the finest examples of spiritual leadership in a time of challenge comes to us from Nehemiah. Receiving news from home he is suddenly confronted with insurmountable problems. His homeland is in distress, the people have been shamed, the walls of the city of Jerusalem have been broken down and the gates burned.



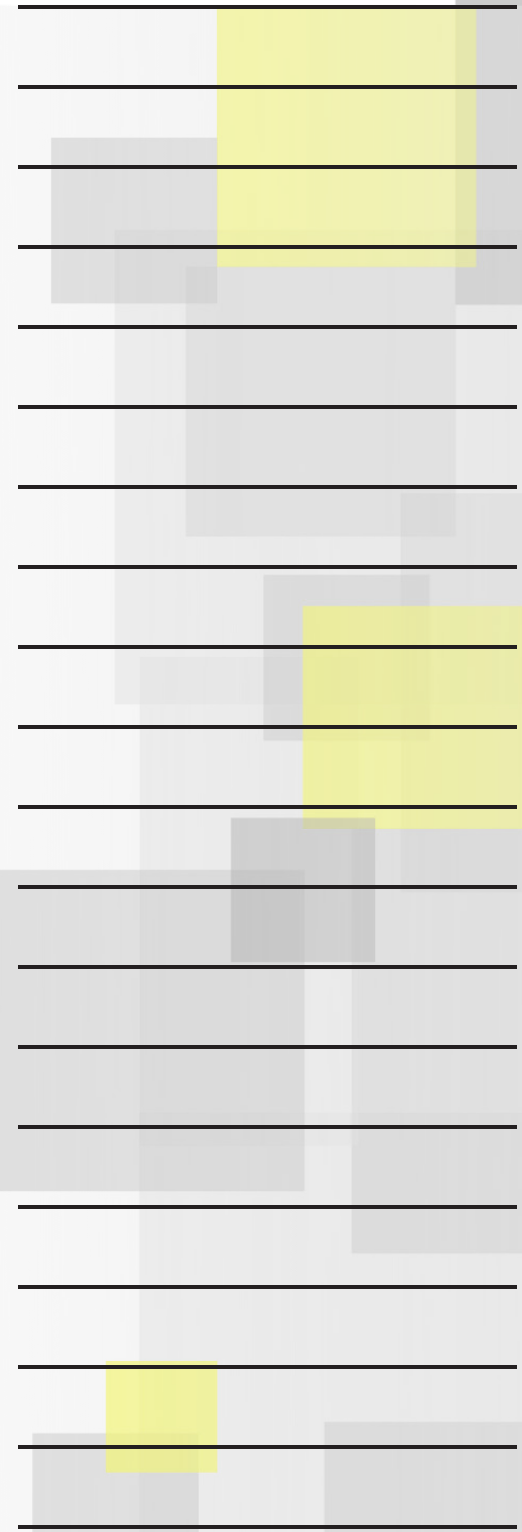
Wayne Cordeiro in his book, *The Divine Mentor* asks rather poignant questions; “Will we choose to spend quiet, reflective time alone with the Lord? Or will we allow life’s pressures to work us into a frazzle? Will we build a sacred enclosure around our roots, or will we allow frenzied foot traffic to erode our spiritual roots and send us crashing to the earth?” The temptation is to allow the tyranny of the urgent to rule the day, but there should be nothing more urgent than spending time with God, learning from the mentors in the Bible, and becoming prepared for the journey. We don’t have all the answers to the challenges that we are facing and that’s why we need the Lord.

Cordeiro goes on to say.

“Our shortage of wisdom keeps us seeking Him and prevents us from becoming hardhearted. It keeps us humble, malleable, correctable, changeable, and transformable, so that with each new day we might increasingly reflect His image.”

What we learn from mentors is that great leaders take prayer very seriously and realize that without the leadership of God in their lives they can do nothing. In our fast-paced world some make claim that taking time to pray is a waste of time. How in the world do we measure prayer? We don't -- because it's not about 'doing' but about 'be-ing,' or, becoming. Nehemiah spent an extended period of time in God's presence before he ever took action. This is what our Biblical mentor teaches us. We, too, must learn to spend extended periods of time in God's holy presence before we jump into the business to which God has called us.

The second thing we learn from Nehemiah is that spiritual leaders take things one step at a time. Faith and dependence upon God become hallmarks of a spiritual leader. One doesn't have to see the final picture, but learn day by day, through step by step dependence upon God. While God may have given Nehemiah a vision to complete the reconstruction of the walls, Nehemiah also realized that there would need to be a plan to simply get to Jerusalem.



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He would never be able to complete the reconstruction without the approval of his boss. Therefore, he didn't spend time praying for the walls to be rebuilt, but he prayed that God would speak to his boss and that his boss would be compassionate with him. This was the immediate need!

Our mentor teaches us that we may not be doing things properly. There are times when we go to God in prayer and instead of being sensitive to what we need to do in little steps, we pray for the whole big picture. There is a place for praying for the big picture, but there is a need to also depend on God's leadership in the little steps that need to be taken to get to the big picture. Great leaders understand and follow God's leadership of the small actions which must be taken to get to the big picture. When we only focus on the big picture, we tend to get frustrated when it doesn't come to fruition. Sometimes the little things seem insignificant in the big picture -- but are they? No, we learn from Nehemiah that a great leader understands the little things and is willing to invest time, energy and prayer in these small items that become the building blocks to the big picture.

Prayer and God's guidance in the little steps -- that's where we need to begin! Neither of those two probably sound very "successful" in the world's eyes, but serving in the kingdom is not about being "successful" by human standards, and kingdom leadership begins by understanding this, and knowing that the principles which are followed are not necessarily of this world.

“The journey to a spiritually vital church must begin within your own heart. After that, you can explore and implement ... best-practice strategies you've read about and pursue insights inspired by the other research findings. But if you get that order reversed relying on strategies before working on your heart beware. You cannot reproduce in others what you are not producing in yourself. The main thing you need to do the one thing you must do is fully within your reach. You must surrender all. Everything.”

¹ Hawkins, Greg L.; Parkinson, Cally (2011-08-12). *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth* (Kindle Locations 4035-4039). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

This is why we must turn to the Word of God to find our Divine Mentors. We do this to help us:

- Find the help we need when difficult tests come.
- Walk with both the heroes and the fools of the Bible – we learn from both!
- Start thinking like God thinks, so we can respond as God responds.
- Avoid costly errors and so avoid decades of misery.

To learn from the Biblical mentors, we need to create sacred space in our lives.

“Will we choose to spend quiet, reflective time alone with the Lord? Or will we allow life’s pressures to work us into a frazzle? Will we build a sacred enclosure around our roots, or will we allow frenzied foot traffic to erode our spiritual roots and send us crashing to the earth?” (Cordeiro, Loc. 257)

None of us has the wisdom that we need for life:

- “Our shortage of wisdom keeps us seeking Him and prevents us from becoming hardhearted. It keeps us humble, malleable, correctable, changeable, and transformable, so that with each new day we might increasingly reflect His image.” (Loc. 347)
- “If Consequences has a back-end price, Wisdom has a front-end price. It requires discipline, obedience, consistency, and above all else, time. Then it gladly pours on you its promised tremendous riches.” (Loc 392)

One of the biggest mistakes that I find people make is expecting a mentor to be the one who does all the work. You cannot be a passive participant in the relationship. If you are looking for mentors in the Bible, you will have to do the work:

