

“A Living Faith: Mentor Strength”

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1 Corinthians 4:14-17

It is hard to imagine a more impossible situation growing up. Peter says that his life began by way of a chance sexual encounter between his mom and dad in between his dad’s prison sentences after the two of them were divorced. His mother was addicted to drugs and his dad to alcohol.

Until he was four he was raised by a grandfather and then at four-years-old he was adopted by a great uncle as his grandfather was dying. His great uncle moved him and his brother into a children’s home and school where he became a house parent. While there his great uncle sexually abused him from the time he was four until he was a teenager.

If not for the good people he met at the school who genuinely cared about him and invested their lives in him, Peter would surely have been truly lost.

Peter was the quarterback on his high school football team and the offensive coordinator was one of

the people who became a good mentor, showing him by example a different kind of life than the one in which he grew up. He showed Peter what a healthy relationship with a wife looked like. He took him fishing and hunting as well as to church on Sundays.

The time that Peter’s offensive coordinator invested in him truly was his salvation.

Through that relationship, he offered Peter guidance to choose a healthy life path. Truly, it was this mentor relationship and several others that provided for Peter a foundation on which he could stand for the first time in his life — and he would need this foundation because life was not easy in the coming years.

Peter got a full-ride scholarship to play football in college, but experienced a huge set back when he was cut from the team at the beginning of his sophomore year. He felt betrayed, rejected, and he lost his sense of identity.

In his junior year he chose to follow Jesus for the first time and got involved in an organization called Campus Outreach. The Director of the organization became another mentor for Peter.

After graduating from college, he was in Florida and discovered that his biological father was nearby, so he went to visit him. He was horribly disappointed and hurt, because his father didn't recognize him and started dumping on him all of the bad things he had done in his life.

So Peter left in tears feeling years of pain pound through his body. At that crucial point, he was able to lean on his newest mentor, the Campus Outreach Director who listened without judgement, and offered acceptance and love. This gave him access to healing at a deeper level.

When things go awry and our life is rocked, who is it that we lean on? To whom do we go for support, to be grounded, to gain the strength to continue on, to allow the tears to flow, and to re-center our lives?

Do you have a mentor?

Sometimes we simply need good friends who unconditionally support and love us through the tough times when it matters most. Other times we need a good mentor, who can offer something a bit different.

Mentors are people who have a more mature life wisdom than we do. They often are older, but it's

not about age, because good mentors have worked through the challenging experiences of life and have learned some important lessons and are turning those into strength for our lives because they have invested in us as human beings.

We go to mentors for guidance, for direction, and sometimes for reassurance that we are on the right path.

Good mentors in some ways are like parents, but from outside our biological family having had different kinds of life experiences than us. Therefore they have the ability to see into our blind spots, those places others in our family can't typically see.

This was the case for a mentor named Paul and a younger man under his tutelage named Timothy. Paul repeatedly described the mentoring relationship he had with Timothy like that of a father to a son.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 4:14-17

In the early days of the church in which Paul lived, in particular in Corinth, there were simply no good examples of people living out a Christ-like faith in society — none like Paul who exhibited self-sacrificing generosity.

However, they were familiar with many who played power and control games with the people making themselves rich. Paul wanted them to know there was another way to live that was much more life-giving and full of integrity.

In order for them to live in this new way, they needed mentors to look up to who had the essence of Christ in them. They needed good examples to follow, like Paul.

It wasn't arrogance on Paul's part to say that they needed to follow his example, but it came from a deep concern for the people that they would have a way to grow and mature in this new pattern of life that Jesus demonstrated for them.

So, Paul said "Imitate me." And when he wasn't with them, they could imitate Timothy, whose life closely resembled Christ's and Paul's.

Paul must have been very proud of Timothy, his young apprentice. He sent Timothy not only to Corinth but to other places as well because he imitated Christ so well through Paul's example. He wrote this to the churches in the city of Philippi.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may

be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

Mentorship truly was the pathway for the Church to become stable and to grow. Without good examples, good mentors, the Christ-like way of life would disintegrate in those communities.

There was a strength found in mentoring relationships that could not be replaced by anything else.

Good mentors are just as important in our day.

If we are going to be good students in school, we look to good teachers who have nurtured wisdom in their field of study.

If we want to be successful in business, we search for a good mentor who has gone ahead of us and done well.

If we desire to have an amazing marriage and make it through our

parenting years with well-balanced kids, we look to those who are older and have been through that season of life to mentor us.

And when we want to have a deep, meaningful, and purposeful faith, we look to a wise spiritual mentor who has deepened their faith over time as a guide for our journey.

Finding good mentors gives us strength!

Another way to understand the mentor relationship is to think of how a coach gets the best out of the players on their team.

More than simply finding good mentor coaches, we need to be humble and listen with open ears and hearts to our mentor coach that we might learn and grow.

We need to be open to trust them to illuminate our blind spots, those things that inhibit our growth that we simply can't see ourselves.

We even need to be open to give up what we think we know by considering a new viewpoint. If we are not open and humble we will be left in the same place we started.

You see, God created people to be with one another, to learn from one

another, to grow with one another, to gain strength from one another.

The author of an ancient scroll called Ecclesiastes, understood this truth. They reflected on their observations of life and wrote,

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. (4:9-10)

Certainly this is true of friendships, but also of mentoring relationships. A mentor can help us sort through life when we fall and help us to learn from the experience. They can also help us avoid pitfalls to which others have been victim.

With good mentors we are much stronger than we would be on our own.

Right now, we are beginning to create a way for mentor relationships (or coaching relationships) to thrive in our congregation both for people who have been here a long time as well as for brand new people.

We believe that a mentor coach can make all the difference in the quality and depth of our lives. To this our congregation is committed.