

# **WITH: A Guide to Informal Mentoring**

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### **Print books by Alvin L. Reid**

*Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional.* Broadman & Holman, 2009.

*Join the Movement.* Kregel, 2007.

*Radically Unchurched.* Kregel, 2002.

*Raising the Bar.* Kregel, 2004.

(with Mark Liederbach) *The Convergent Church: Missional Worshipers in an Emerging Culture.* Kregel, 2009.

(with Malcolm McDow) *Firefall.* Pleasant Word, 2001.

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## Introduction

**“When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and knew that they had been WITH Jesus.” Acts 4:13**

Recently I spoke to a group of fine young leaders. During the break a young lady asked me an intriguing question.

“If you had five minutes to tell me anything not in your presentation,” she queried, “What would you tell me?”

I had an immediate answer. “Get a mentor,” I said, “Then, mentor someone else.”

I am not sure I would have answered her question like that a few years ago. I am quite sure I would not have as a young man. But recent years and a little reflection have caused me to see the enormous value of mentoring. Most of my ministry I have spoken to crowds of various sizes, more large than small. As a teacher, I lecture to groups all the time too large to be considered a “small group.” As a preacher I have spoken in small mission churches and in huge megachurches. Each time I sought to be a faithful, effective communicator of truth, calling people to gospel change. But over the past few years I have come to realize the greatest impact a leader can make is not in the masses to whom he speaks, but in those he mentors.

Jesus spoke to multitudes.

He fed thousands.

He taught many.

He sent out seventy to witness.

But He changed the world with only twelve.

Even more than that, He poured Himself especially into three: Peter, James, and John.

Movements that change the world begin and grow with a few, not with a crowd. Mentoring takes time, investment, and effort. But I can honestly say after over 30 years of ministry that the greatest impact I have made for the Kingdom has come in the few who called me their mentor, not the masses who heard me

teach.

The idea of informal mentoring struck me first in a field ministry course during my seminary days. One day a guest speaker said some things that resonated with me. His name was Jack Taylor, and his book *Prayer: Life's Limitless Reach* had a big impact on me in those days. I could tell he spent much time with Jesus. He said two things that day I have remembered from then until now. First, he said sometimes he did not feel like praying, but he prayed anyway because it was the right thing to do. That struck me, an idealistic young minister who thought one who truly loved Jesus always wanted to pray. The statement gave me a bit of encouragement that one can walk with Jesus and still have times where discipline leads rather than passion.

That statement helped me in walking with Jesus. But the next statement changed the entire way I thought about being with others. "I almost never go anywhere by myself," he said. "I constantly take people with me, those I seek to disciple, to mentor, to experience life."

Soon after that class I became a pastor and I remembered his words. I took at least one layman with me everywhere I went: to make visits in the community, to conferences, to the hospital. When Michelle and I went to our first national pastor's conference I took a young man along. When we attended a large small group Sunday school conference, I took some church members, and they helped me to spread the information we learned there. Later, as a young leader in the state of Indiana, I took young church planters with me to places like First Baptist Woodstock, Georgia, to be mentored and pushed. Some of those young men's lives were changed forever because of those times.

And so was mine.

Now, there were (and are) times when only Michelle and I went places as a couple. And, sometimes I need to be alone. Rarely. But what changed for me was the notion that whenever it made sense to take others with me.

After becoming a professor, first at Houston Baptist University and now for a decade and a half at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, I began and now continue to take students with me. This semester I will take dozens along with me on trips, not to mention the many students we have over at our house to

watch ball games and otherwise hang out.

There have been many positive and often unintended consequences of this practice. The greatest relates to our children. Because of my habit of taking others with me, as our children got older I began taking them. The result has been that our son Josh, a fantastic drummer, has traveled with me for years in a worship band. In addition, our daughter Hannah has traveled all over the country and even across the globe with me on trips. Another consequence has been my realization that although I am an academic who teaches courses on the undergrad, graduate, and doctoral levels, only about half of the teaching I do actually happens in class. The other half comes by the times I have students with me—going to speak at a university, hanging out at a local coffee shop, going out witnessing in the community, or just running errands. I have learned of the power of being “with” others. As a result, the greatest impact I have made as a teacher and a minister has not been the thousands of students I have taught or now the hundreds of thousands to whom I have preached. It has been those individuals who have walked with me in normal, everyday life, talking about ministry and theology to be sure, but talking so much as well about living life for Christ.

I call this informal mentoring.

It assumes the best learning comes not from simply listening to a leader, but being with one.

If you are a leader let me ask a question: who are you mentoring? The answer to that question matters. I have had the honor of preaching in some of the largest churches in America. My greatest impact comes not from the many who hear me speak but in the few with whom I share my life through informal mentoring.

The following material does not claim to offer a comprehensive description or strategy for mentoring. It rather seeks to introduce you to one specific kind, the kind I believe Jesus employed, and the kind I believe to be the most effective both for the mentor and the mentee, protégé, or student (I will use these three terms as synonyms).

I call this informal mentoring. It assumes the best learning comes not from simply listening to a leader, but being with one.

Before reading further, take a moment and think of places you already go and things you already do where you could invite someone along. Then, think about someone younger in the faith you could take “with” you.

## Chapter One

### WITH: What is Informal Mentoring?

**“Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.” Paul, in I Cor. 11:1**

**Great men lead people, but greater men train leaders.” Bill Bright**

Andy had only been a believer a short time when he came to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Young, fiery, and full of zeal, I liked him from the first day of class. He had another feature I greatly value in students: he was hungry to learn.

Teachable men make for great leaders.

So, I invited Andy to go with me on a trip. He asked questions you would expect from a hungry young Christ follower. He came from an unchurched background and wanted to focus every fiber of his life on following Christ. He knew he had much to learn and eagerly sought to grow.

I took him to Virginia for a weekend while I spoke at a church in the Tidewater area. We drove back through a hurricane (I made him drive my car, which was good for his faith development). On Saturday morning I got up early, as is my custom, to spend time with the Lord and to begin working on a project.

He sat up, looked around, and crawled out of his bed. He didn't say anything (I am a gregarious person, but what I am focused on a project I become antisocial). A little later he looked at me and said, “You know, if you get up on Saturday morning instead of sleeping till noon, you can get a lot of school work done.”

I resisted saying “Way to go, Captain Obvious,” or “Nice job, Einstein.” Andy to that point had been a typical young man who felt entitled to stay out all hours at night and goof off all weekend. You know, like the college student who claims to be passionate for Jesus but really just loves to hang out.

I never gave him a lecture on study habits. I did not give him an inspiring talk on how to be the next great scholar. I simply got out of bed and got after it, and he was with me to see it.

So much of life is caught more than taught. Or better, taught by being caught. I learned more from my father and from mentors by watching than from listening, although both matter. I learned how to share Christ by going with someone and watching them.

Andy and some other students traveled with me for the next couple of years. We became so close that when I went on trips out of town in which he did not join me, Andy would go over and play with our then-young children. He took every class he could with me. In one particular class he met a young lady my wife and I knew very well. Her name was Tanya. She had lost her husband Ray, whom I had taught my first year at Southeastern, to a brain tumor. She asked me to speak at an event. I could not, but I had come to have a great deal of confidence in Andy, so I recommended him. Next thing you know, they were married, and now they have planted a vibrant church in Delaware and have some beautiful children of their own.

I am a killer matchmaker when I do not know what I am doing.

Andy represents the best teaching I have ever done. Yes, I have won various recognitions for my work as a classroom teacher. But the greatest award comes in the lives of men like Andy. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:2, “You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, recognized and read by everyone.”

Who are the Andy’s in your life?

### **What Is a Mentor?**

The term “mentor” actually comes from Greek mythology. Before going away to fight the Trojan War, Odysseus sought to find a man who would care for his son Telemachus. Odysseus wanted a man to raise his son just as he would if he were there. He found a man who did just that.

The man’s name? Mentor.

In his excellent book *The Be-With Factor*, authors Bo Boshers and Judson Poling observe:

A mentor is not a tutor. A tutor is an expert in one subject and helps the

student learn that subject. But a mentor's scope is much wider, and more about life in general.

A mentor is not a professional counselor. A student with a sustained emotional problem should not only look to a mentor for help but also seek a qualified Christian counselor.

A mentor is not a teacher. You're not an instructor in a classroom and the goal is not to help a student master some body of material. Mentors work through life, not books.

A mentor isn't a small group leader or shepherd, though they could participate in this ministry as well. Small group leaders have more students (usually four to ten) based around curriculum or a book study.<sup>1</sup>

Mentoring provides a higher form of leadership; a remarkable means to lead future (and current) leaders. The old saying, "he who thinks he is leading and no one is following, is only taking a walk," can be applied to mentoring as well.

Consider this sobering question: If you stand before people as a pastor, a teacher, or a leader, and no one you teach or lead ever comes to you to be mentored, what of worth are you saying? If you are a parent or a growing follower of Christ and no one ever wants to know more about your journey, how well are you progressing? If you live a life that demonstrates Jesus, you will have plenty of people who want to be mentored. Mentoring is not an institution to manage--it is a lifestyle to emulate.

If you are a pastor, you simply cannot reduce all your influence and teaching to the time in the pulpit, as vital as that time is. If you are a student pastor you surely want your impact to be greater than serving as a glorified social planner. You desire to invest in students, not just run a ministry. If you teach a Bible study, lead people in any capacity, and especially if you are a parent, mentoring should be a priority.

Paul sounded this advice to Timothy when he declared, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). This form of training leaders

has received too little attention, while gurus of leadership become famous for rehashing principles better learned in a more personal relationship. Paul mentored Timothy, and Timothy mentored others. Such multiplication is one of the great needs of the contemporary church.

## **Types of Mentoring**

I do not intend in this ebook to give an elaborate description of mentoring, but to demonstrate how mentoring can occur through everyday life. At least two kinds of mentoring develops leaders: *formal* and *informal*. In formal mentoring a leader will gather regularly with a small group for teaching and accountability.

My first formal mentoring proved to be invaluable. I was in college when a man named Curtis took two other students and me through intensive discipleship, Scripture memory, and witnessing. This vital experience marked me. However, what made this real was the times my mentor did things with me or the others outside our formal meeting time. That helped to flesh out the topics we studied.

I know pastors who effectively mentor key laymen; others mentor young men who have surrendered to vocational ministry. Let me stop and ask you just now, who do you intentionally mentor?

I think any leader should be regularly meeting with a small group in a more formal way. I have been doing this for years. But it is much easier to fake it if you are in a more formal setting, to go through the motions while living differently away from the group. Institutionalizing always has the danger of fossilizing, and in something like mentoring which demands intimacy to be truly effective, the benefits of formal mentoring may be limited.

The second form of mentoring I call informal mentoring, simply involving individuals you seek to mentor in the regular, normal aspects of your life. Why informal mentoring? Informal mentoring lets you see the person as they live life—how they respond to people, to circumstances, etc. But beware: it also lets them see you for who you are. If you as the mentor are better at talking than living, you will not long enjoy informal mentoring.

If you as the mentor are all talk, you will not long enjoy informal mentoring. You would be much better off controlling the environment.

It's not either-or but both-and. As I noted I do both. But I can say without any hesitancy that the greatest impact God has given me in young adults whom I have mentored came through informal mentoring. There are some advantages to informal mentoring. Over the years I have mentored a host of students through both methods. One of the things I have learned about people I mentored is this: some want to be mentored because they want to be pushed, stretched, and challenged. Others think they want that, but what they really seek is approval. They prefer approval rather to admonition, and desire encouragement without rebuke.

But one cannot have true community, in a family, in a church, or in a mentoring relationship, without both encouragement and rebuke. A mentoring relationship implies the protégé has much to learn and seeks to learn from the mentor. But when the mentor realizes the person he mentors truly seeks encouragement and affirmation but will not take the hard lessons of stretching and rebuke, the mentoring relationship has hit a wall. Informal mentoring helps to discern just where that wall lies as you do life together outside the more sterile environment of a weekly group.

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I have a remarkably busy schedule. Do you? The thing I love about informal mentoring is it allows me to pour my life into two or three young men (or more) in the course of life. It adds little extra time. There will certainly be some times when you plan specific meetings for one purpose or another, but they will be rare. And, sometimes your student may need you at a time that is not best for you. But can you truly think of something more important than to invest in someone else?

Informal mentoring also allows me to mentor people occasionally and yet

effectively. For instance, if I take half a dozen people with me on a two hour trip to a college campus where I am speaking, we have four hours round trip time to talk about life and godliness. Further, this allows me to take young ladies. I never mentor ladies one on one, but will occasionally involve sharp young ladies in other forms of mentoring. Informal mentoring like this allows for such times.

“Whereas a teacher might describe how to study the Bible, a mentor does a Bible study with a student; the mentor also reacts biblically, without thinking about it, thus showing that the Word has taken root and is not just an abstract concept.”  
*Be-With Factor*, 49.

Another type of mentoring that can be done either formally or informally is peer mentoring. The greatest thing that ever happened to me in my seminary experience was the development of a mentoring friendship with four other men during our doctoral work. The five of us and our wives still get together annually each summer as we can, and we keep up through phone calls and through social media during the year. These men, though my age, are my heroes. They provoke me to good works. In fact, of these five, three serve as pastor of the largest baptist churches in their states; the other two of us train leaders as seminary professors. God has honored our peer mentoring with great influence.

### **The Time Factor**

One reason people hesitate to mentor is that it is extremely time consuming. Mentoring does take time, though informal mentoring helps to minimize time involvement. If the time factor involved in mentoring concerns you, remember this:

1. You have time to do what is important.
2. If you do not control your time, someone will. I let those I am mentoring know up front boundaries for time and for contact.
3. You must be clear on the “big rocks” in your life. No matter how much I care about a student I am mentoring, he will never be as important as my wife and children. They come first. But if I am going to mentor someone,

he must have priority as well.

4. You can, and in fact you must, set boundaries with a mentee. You want to create a mentoring relationship, not a codependent one. You determine times and places to meet, for instance. Some mentees are so hungry to learn, or in some cases in such need, they will monopolize your time if you are not careful. So, remember that saying you are not always available provides a good way to help them first to depend on the Lord who is always there, and second to be mentored by you.

### **You Are a Mentor, and We Need You to Be One**

Perhaps you are not in a position of key leadership like a pastor, church or business leader. “Why should I mentor anyone?” You may be asking. The answer is simple. We all need mentors. And we all need to be mentoring others. Our daughter Hannah mentored 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls for a year when she was only 16. Someone wiser than I said every believer needs a Paul, Timothy, and a Barnabas in his or her life. A “Paul” refers to someone more experienced in the faith and with more wisdom regarding spiritual things. “Timothy” means someone younger in the faith who needs to be pushed by a Paul. And “Barnabas” refers to an encourager—we all need those!

Certainly there are settings where specific knowledge and/or experience make the mentor appropriate for the protégé. I currently mentor several students earning a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Such students may only be mentored in the program by someone who has earned a PhD, and who has demonstrated a scholarly contribution in the given field of study. I am qualified to mentor a PhD student in my field. But I am not competent to mentor a young man in how to take care of the finances of a local church. I have a PhD, but believe me, I am not qualified for that! Nor am I qualified to help a young mom raise small children to love Jesus and His gospel. But my wife, who has no advanced degree, is suited perfectly for that.

Look at the words of Titus 2:2-6: “Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older

women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.”

Notice the words. This passage encourages believers who are older to pour themselves into those who are younger: older women to younger ladies, and older men to younger guys. There is no expectation of remarkable doctrinal insight or ability to communicate or really any sort of expertise. Instead, younger women and men need mentors who demonstrate self-control, purity, diligence, and other traits that should be exhibited in any believer who has walked with Christ for long.

So what does it take to be a mentor? It does not take a PhD, a title, or an impressive resume. But it does take a believer who demonstrates the character of Christ.

So what are you waiting for? What is keeping you from mentoring someone? If you know there exists in you a glaring inconsistency, before you mentor, repent. You do not have to be perfect, but you do need to be consistent in your walk. The goal of mentoring is to help the mentee become more like Jesus than you, and the more you are like Jesus the more success you will likely have.

“And what is the Be-With Factor? It is simply the act of “being with” a few students and modeling for them how a Christ-follower thinks and acts. It’s taking a student or two along with you in some of your routine activities, connecting with them personally as you go through your day.” *Be-With Factor*, 11.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Jesus' Practice of Informal Mentoring**

**“And they will name Him Immanuel, which is translated "God is WITH us." Matthew 1:23**

I remember the first time Matt asked a question in my class. I do not remember the question. But I remember the way he asked it, and something more.

I remember the look in his eyes. You know, the look someone has when they want something so badly, almost to the point of desperation. Matt had the look of someone who just HAD to know Jesus more, how to love people more, and how to serve God more effectively.

I remember that look.

Years later, Matt still has it.

He took every class with me he could. He hung out with me at every opportunity. And, in the Providence of God, a young lady in our college named Laura had started hanging out with our Hannah, a middle schooler at the time. Matt and Laura started dating. You guessed it, they are now married, and parents, and Matt is one of the most effective young ministers I have ever known.

In fact, right as Matt was about to graduate, I got a call from a friend named Allan Taylor, the Minister of Education at the great First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia. “We need a high school minister, and we need a great one,” he said. Matt’s name came to mind. He really did not have a lot of experience, and none for a ministry the size of Woodstock. His resume had no “wow” factor (if all you have is a cool resume, you don’t have much). But he had IT, whatever you want to call it. He had that amazing capacity to learn, and I believed deeply he could do the job.

I called Allan and told him I had a name. I said I believed Matt could do it, but he would need Allan to mentor him some early on. Matt and Laura went to Woodstock.

FBC Woodstock pastor Johnny Hunt, a great leader and recent president

of the Southern Baptist Convention, has told me more than once he has never seen a student pastor more effective than Matt.

I do not claim credit for Matt's effectiveness; that belongs to God. But I do give Matt credit for his tenacious desire to be mentored. I am still mentoring him in fact, and in some ways, he now mentors me. Matt needed the education Southeastern gave him. But even more, he needed to be with someone, in this case with me.

Jesus came to be with us. His name Immanuel means that. The Incarnation declares this fact. As soon as His public ministry inaugurated He called men to be with Him in ministry. These men did not attend a weekly class, though Jesus taught them much. They did not enlist; He chose them. They did not pass some external test to qualify, but it cost them everything to follow, even their own lives.

You cannot read the Gospels without seeing how much Jesus valued time with His disciples.

We read of the earliest days of Jesus' ministry in John's Gospel. In chapter one Jesus invites some fishermen to spend the day with Him. But all four Gospels record much of our Lord's time with the twelve.

In Matthew 4 we read how Jesus called these same men from John 1 to be with Him at a much deeper level. Perhaps there are people in your life you see as potential mentees. Before you know for sure you need to spend a little time with them, as Jesus did. You cannot mentor well people you hardly know. Note the following from the *Be With Factor*:

“Jesus selected twelve, and we know that there were a few others in this inner circle, including at least three women (Luke 8:1-3).”<sup>2</sup>

“We know from history that it was common for a Jewish teacher (called a rabbi) to gather around himself a small cluster of people who would become his disciples (the word means “learners”). Jesus used a similar technique of close association in daily life to teach his young disciples. He knew the power of modeling. He knew it would take more than a classroom, book, or conferences—more than thirty minutes of training a week—to transform his followers into his image and set into motion a new

world movement.”<sup>3</sup>

What can we learn from the informal mentoring of Jesus? A whole book could be written on that. In fact, one has. Robert Coleman penned *The Master Plan of Evangelism* to detail our Lord’s investment in the 12. He observed eight features of Jesus’ work with the disciples:

1. *Selection*. Men were His method: “His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow.”
2. *Association*. He stayed with them: “His disciples were distinguished, not by outward conformity to certain rituals, but by being with Him, and thereby participating in His doctrine.”
3. *Consecration*. He required obedience: “[The disciples] were not required to be smart, but they had to be loyal. This became the distinguishing mark by which they were known.”
4. *Impartation*. He gave Himself away: “His was a life of giving—giving away what the Father had given Him.”
5. *Demonstration*. He showed them how to live: “Surely it was no accident that Jesus often let His disciples see Him conversing with the Father. . . . Jesus did not force that lesson on them, but rather He kept praying until at last the disciples got so hungry that they asked Him to teach them what He was doing.”
6. *Delegation*. He assigned them work: “Jesus was always building His ministry for the time when His disciples would have to take over His work, and go out into the world with the redeeming Gospel.”
7. *Supervision*. He kept check on them: “Jesus made it a point to meet with His disciples following their tours of service to hear their reports and to share with them the blessedness of His ministry in doing the same thing.”
8. *Reproduction*. He expected them to reproduce: “Jesus intended for the disciples to produce His likeness in and through the church being gathered out of the world.”

Coleman's book pulls together systematically how Jesus trained the twelve. I encourage you to read it if you have not.

Let's examine Matthew's Gospel to observe Jesus and His approach to mentoring His disciples by being with them. I understand the context here is different from the informal mentoring we would do today. For one thing, we are not the Son of God coming to die for the sins of the world. For another, these men actually lived together, traveling full time. We will, most likely, spend far less time with those we informally mentor. But I am convinced the way Jesus walked and lived and taught before His disciples can help us greatly to redeem the time we have with others to push them toward godliness.

### **Being With Jesus Does Not Mean Being Comfortable**

*They were WITH Him but it was not always COMFORTABLE.*

Mentoring involves pushing people out of their comfort zones. There must be a level of devotion to the process. Some did not want to follow Jesus when they saw the cost. In Matthew 8 we read of those who said they would follow him, but with caveats. One said, "let me first bury my father," for instance. Later in that chapter He allowed His disciples to be tossed around in a boat during a storm. Following Jesus never came without a cost.

I am a teacher, so I love to give tests. Often I give pop quizzes in the course of informal mentoring without ever announcing them as such.

### **Being With Jesus Means Seeing Others as He Sees Them**

The disciples learned that Jesus did not see others the way most in the society of their day saw people.

*WITH Jesus in EVANGELISM*

His disciples saw how Jesus called people to follow Him. This included the disciples themselves. In Matthew 9 we read about Jesus' call to Matthew, the tax collector, to follow Him. Immediately Jesus went to Matthew's home to hang out with other "sinners" (tax collectors were pretty low on the "awful sinner list") like

His new disciple. The Pharisees criticized him for such association. Jesus replied: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." (Matthew 9:12) It is one thing to learn in a classroom or small group to care for the lost, but another to demonstrate it even when it does not fit the religious culture.

*In the CULTURE observing lostness around them*

Later in Matthew 9:36 we read of Jesus' attitude toward the people He observed: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. " The disciples learned compassion by seeing it lived out. They also learned something out of this experience regarding spiritual disciplines, for Jesus went on to tell them to pray for harvesters to reach those who needed God's grace.

*He sent them Out*

Jesus sent his disciples out to learn by doing. He never did for them what they could do themselves. Matthew 10 records His simple directive: go to Jews, and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is near (verse 7). He then gave very practical advice as to how they should conduct that mission in verses 8- 15. Then, in verses 16-33 He makes it exceedingly clear that the response they will receive will not always be gracious, and may in fact be dangerous. Again, Jesus never pulled punches for His followers. In a day where Christianity too often expects the minimum of commitment, reading the mentoring approach of Jesus offers an encouraging, even if difficult, model.

### **Being With Jesus Means Being Defended by Him**

Though Jesus never hid how difficult it would be to follow Him, He also defended those He mentored. We should never leave those we mentor hanging out to dry, even when they sometimes fail.

In Matthew 15 the Pharisees came to Jesus and criticized the twelve for breaking the traditions (they did not wash their hands before eating in the proper manner). Jesus turned the tables on them, asking why they broke the commandments of God with their traditions! Jesus never hesitated to defend those who followed Him.

## **Being With Jesus Means Having Your Faith Stretched**

Jesus did not merely hang out with the disciples and give them tasks to accomplish. He stretched their faith. He challenged the way they thought. He pushed them intellectually.

*He challenged them theologically*

In Matthew 16 Jesus gave the disciples a pop quiz of their own. He asked what other people were saying about Him. Then He asked them to declare their understanding of their leader. Peter then offered that memorable declaration, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Still, Peter did not get it all correctly, as the verses following his declaration demonstrate. But Jesus pushed His men to think rightly and to think about the consequences of their belief.

*He involved them in key event*

In Matthew 17 we read of the Transfiguration. Jesus took Peter, James and John to this momentous occasion. As they left the scene He warned them not to tell anyone. Those we mentor must see our transparency and be allowed to join us in times of importance. I can remember key mentors of mine allowing me to join them in special events. It is one thing to paint a house for a professor and to gain some time with him through doing that. But it is another to have him invite you to go with him as he presents a paper at an important academic society meeting.

I occasionally take a young man I am mentoring on a weekend trip. While such a commitment requires a significant amount of my time, and also some well-defined boundaries (sometimes I like being to myself), I find that I enjoy that greater amount of time in the context of ministry. Remember Andy? I went to California on a special trip to attend a meeting and to preach at one of the greatest churches in that state. I asked his pastor from his home church to pay for a plane ticket so he could go with me. Ironically, I did the same thing later with a student from that very church in California named Walter whom I still mentor. I got the California church to buy him a ticket to travel with me. Those times are rare. Okay, time with me does not compare to the Transfiguration! But such

times help those you mentor see how much you value them.

### **Being With Jesus Means Embracing Humility**

*He pushed them toward humility*

In Matthew 18 His disciples asked Jesus about greatness. He used a child to turn their question from the subject of greatness to talk about humility. This is interesting because in Matthew 19, those same disciples rebuked people for bringing children to Jesus for Him to pray over them. Jesus rebuked them, and reminded the disciples that the kingdom of heaven belonged to the likes of children.

Humility never comes naturally. We must be reminded of it. Jesus had to remind those He mentored of it. In Matthew 20 the mother of James and John asked Jesus to sit on the right and left of Jesus in His kingdom, a rather arrogant request. Just after that encounter He demonstrated compassion on lepers, reminding them the most overlooked in culture mattered to Him. Jesus used everything from children to lepers to help remind His disciples the importance of humility. Few lessons will be greater for you to teach those you mentor. Remember what C.S. Lewis said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.”

### **Being With Jesus Means Having Clarity about What Matters in Life**

At the end of Matthew Jesus gives His followers the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). He did not leave them with generic teaching and examples to go forth and live generic lives that just did the minimum and never caused trouble. He gave them a clear directive: make disciples. If we love those we mentor, and pour ourselves into them, and help them see the Scriptures more clearly, but we fail to help them see how to live life focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have failed. When all is said and done, much more is said than is done. Make sure you mentor others to see the joy and the necessity of living life for the gospel.

As I mentioned, we've only looked at one Gospel account. So much more has been written. My best advice to you would be to begin a thorough study of all 4 Gospels to see how Jesus intentionally, yet informally, mentored the twelve as they were with Him.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Ministering With**

**“He wanted them to be WITH Him.” Mark 13:14**

This morning I sat in a hospital waiting room as my mother faced cancer surgery (she came through with flying colors by God’s grace). My parents’ pastor, a fine young man still in his 20s, sat with us. A dad of a 1 ½ year old and another on the way, he asked me advice for raising his children. I gave him the best advice I ever heard:

Find what your children love to do and do it with them.

I stopped playing golf early on because Josh had no interest in the game. I have however been to lots (LOTS!) of ball games with him: minor league baseball UNC Tar Heel basketball, football, and baseball games, pro games in several sports. Next summer we plan to hit four or five major league parks in one week just as a dad and son to celebrate his college graduation. I have also been to countless meals and shopping malls with Hannah. Both have gone with me on more trips than we can count.

I simply desired to be with my children, learning to love what they love. And an unexpected consequence came as a result. I just wanted my children not to hate ministry and its demands on their dad. They actually love it (much credit for that goes to my wife Michelle!).

If you are a parent, find what your children love to do and do that with them.

For years Josh has traveled with me as a drummer in a great worship band. We have ministered to tens of thousands of people, seen so many come to Christ, and have grown together. Hannah has also traveled a lot with us, but she has especially enjoyed going overseas. We have been to Asia and Europe, not to mention Manhattan a couple of times among other places. Ministering with my

children is the greatest mentoring of all.

But that joy in mentoring spills over to my students. I recognize my situation is a little unique as I serve in a setting where many young men (and women) allow me ample opportunities to mentor them by taking a group or a single guy on trips. You may not travel as much and you may have only one or two (or just a few) protégés. Don't think you have less to offer because you are not an author, a preacher, or a seminary professor. Your impact on a few will have tremendous rippling effect on others. So if you are a businessman, apply these concepts to a young man (or maybe your son). If a homemaker, take a young lady with you to the grocery store or the mall. If a local church minister, think of times you can practice being with others as you go about your work.

I almost never go any place that involves driving without taking at least one student. I plan certain trips to take a group. Because I am a little over half an hour from the airport I often have students give me a ride to or from the airport.

Take a few minutes and look at your calendar for the past month and the month ahead. Can you find any events, engagements or trips that would allow you to take someone along? Can you think of anyone who might want to go?

Of course there are a few things to remember in terms of integrity. I am married. I have never nor will I ever take a young lady with me on any trip involving just the two of us. I certainly do take young ladies, but always as part of a group. I also take people who want to learn and who seek wisdom about life, not just to hang out. I try to be clear on when we will leave and return as they have schedules too.

Here are some places I take mentees with me:

- College campuses: each year I speak at several colleges and universities. For instance, I speak annually at East Carolina University. Every time I have gone anywhere from three to six students have come along (and once I brought my snake!).
- Youth rallies: I especially like to take young men interested in speaking at such events.
- Pastors meetings: associational or larger pastors meetings afford a great time not only for a mentee to go on a trip, but to learn from the content at the given

meeting.

- One day training: I recently spoke at a church planting event in NC. I took a great group of five students, some who are thinking about church planting.
- Weekend trips: I confess I am picky here. I do not want just anyone staying with me in a hotel for a weekend. Some students are great on short trips but lousy for a weekend! When I am speaking a lot over a weekend I am really focused. For periods of time I am fairly antisocial, and so anyone who comes with me has to be able to give me some space.

I mentioned earlier how formal mentoring, including studying a subject together and the discipline of regular meetings, can be helpful. But one can come to a small group and be mentored for a lengthy period of time and still hide things. Too many who grow up in church learn the game without even being aware they are playing it. They know the spiritual catch phrases to say, the people to show respect to, and how to put up a front.

Traveling with someone shows you little things. Even such things as personal hygiene, devotions, interaction with strangers, and how they meet people can show some aspects of their life. Watching a ball game helped me see how a young man who otherwise demonstrated a real passion for Jesus had an idolatry issue with sports, even spewing profanity when his team was losing. Losing control like that over something so trivial as a ball game demonstrates an area of training need. I have observed many good traits, and a few bad ones, about a young man's view of the opposite sex by traveling together. Here are some things to watch:

How do they treat people who have authority over them—respect?

How do they treat people who have no power—the waitress, the hotel clerk, etc?

How do they act after they have been with you for a while— do they begin to show an attitude of entitlement, etc?

Do they act differently around you than with others?

I discovered one young man who spent a lot of time with me acted quite respectfully toward me and others when I was around, but treated people with disrespect when I was away. That is a good reason to take the two or three you

mentor with you as a group at times!

Let me repeat: you cannot have community without at least two vital elements. First, you must have encouragement. I have refused to mentor some young men because they were so consistently negative. I honestly did not want to be discouraged just by being around them. And you as a mentor must encourage those you mentor. Observe their strengths and note their successes. Remember, a great leader (or mentor) sees the potential in those they lead they do not see in themselves.

You cannot have community without both encouragement and rebuke.
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But there is another factor. Let's face it, for most of us encouragement comes pretty easily. I have always been an encourager, which is one reason I believe I have so many young men seeking me to mentor them. But we must include another side to build community. Second, we must be able to rebuke. If you cannot honestly rebuke areas in need of change you simply cannot mentor. If those you mentor do not respect you enough to allow you to rebuke them, you will hit a wall early on.

Sometimes I will say things or put a mentee in a situation just to see how he will respond. Once I sat inside the vehicle in a rainstorm while some young men loaded materials in the downpour. That was unusual for me as I am normally pretty helpful. But I just wanted to see how they would respond. One responded just fine. He was not happy, but did not make a big deal of it. Another stewed over it for some time. It spoke volumes to me. I like to test mentees without ever telling them I am doing so. Life is about tests, after all. This also lets me know better how they will respond when I do need to bring rebuke. Honestly, I have had some young men I spent time with I knew could not take the rebuke. So I kept the relationship at a more superficial level than I wanted.

### **Ministering With People in Evangelism**

Mentoring in evangelism is vital. As evangelism director in Indiana, I worked with a young man who was attempting to plant a church. He felt

unprepared to witness and had become discouraged. I began to spend time with him and put him in contact with others who could encourage him. He attended an evangelism conference in Atlanta, where he stayed in the home of a soul-winning layperson, a member of the First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia. He also received special evangelism training in Indiana. As a result, he began winning people to Christ. After a year of effective witnessing, his mission church led the state in baptisms by ratio! I often take my students with me to share Christ as well.

The philosopher Aristotle, in his *Nichomachean Ethics*, described three kinds of friendships: (1) friendship of utility, based on usefulness derived from your association; (2) friendship of pleasure, based on pleasure in each other's company; and (3) friendship of virtue, derived from mutual admiration. Perhaps mentoring is best done when all three of these elements exist and when it is founded on biblical teaching.

Plan times specifically to be involved in sharing about Christ. It may be a visit to a family who attended your church service. It may be a project to go help people in need, at a homeless shelter, etc, where you can combine mercy with the gospel. But do not underestimate the power of spontaneous times of sharing. I have led servers to Christ in restaurants while traveling with people I mentored at the time. By the way, if you share your faith in restaurants tip very well. Remember, part of the great joy of informal mentoring in a very busy culture is that most of your mentoring is done while doing what you would have been doing anyway. You are just doing it WITH someone.

Here are a few principles to remember for informal mentoring:

1. Pray together always, unless really not possible (will be rare).
2. Look for times to TEACH:

T-Tell some truth, even if simple—point out familiar truth, nuance, reinforce, or explain something not so obvious.

E-Encourage, always noting something positive.

A-Apply. Always help them see the “so what” in life. Knowledge minus application equals frustration.

C-Correct. Watch for subtle or glaring areas to be corrected. Be sensitive

to red flags you have. Yet be humble, and be careful not to confuse your pet peeves with the need for biblical change. You are trying to help them be like Jesus not like you! Share insights from your own life, both successes and failures. Remember, they cannot expose themselves if you do not.

H-Horizon. Always keep the big picture in view. Every time together should be seen as part of a whole, a portion of a greater body of mentoring work.

3. Constantly model humility. I have watched young men ruined in the very work of mentoring, especially when mentored by someone noteworthy (that includes a local church minister). Some of the more effective mentoring programs have been done in large churches with pastors who see the value of mentoring. But I have also seen too many mentored in those settings who displayed little humility and far too much ego as a result of rubbing shoulders with “important” people. If you lead a well known ministry and want to mentor young men, I would challenge you to make sure you have them doing menial work regularly, and put them in circumstances regularly where they will be treated like a servant. You know whether a person has a servant’s heart by how they act when treated like one. Young men easily confuse their time with a “known” person with some entitlement. So constantly look for ways to demonstrate and to teach humility. Modeling it in your own life matters, for that is the best way for your student to learn humility. (see Mt 18:1-3)

## **Chapter Four**

### **Living Life With**

**“We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share WITH you not only the gospel of God but our very lives, because you had become dear to us.” I Thess. 2:8**

I met Bruce his senior year in college. Introduced by his buddy who had just started at Southeastern, I saw in him a great earnestness for God. Getting to know him better the next year in my evangelism class only confirmed that initial observation.

Bruce continued on and we continued to stay close. We shared a passion for the younger generation and both were heavily involved in itinerant ministry. I helped him with a retreat or two early on in our relationship. He went overseas to serve as a missionary for a couple of years before returning to our school to earn a PhD in theology.

Our relationship continued to grow. Our administration wisely hired him to be on our faculty, and now Dr. Ashford serves as dean of our college. We developed a relationship with me serving as his superior and at some level a mentor. He now serves as my boss as I teach some courses in the college.

We just talked on the phone tonight about writing a book together. He dreamed out loud about the possibilities of our teaching together for another 20-25 years.

It is great to do life together. I so enjoy doing this with men like Bruce. Oh, I should add that I played at least a supporting role in their getting together. I got Lauren a job working in our Center for Great Commission Studies when Bruce directed that. When I told him of that, he said, “I am taken with her.”

I smiled. I thought they would make a great pair. But I did not do this to “arrange” anything. I believe in the Holy Spirit. But when you do life with people, and I knew Lauren well as she and Hannah had become very close, you see things some people, especially younger people, do not see as quickly.

Bruce and Lauren are wonderful parents and a fantastic role model to our

students. Bruce now mentors young church planters as Lauren mentors young ladies. The cycle continues, and the Kingdom grows. I watched Bruce grow from a college student to a college dean. I watched Lauren grow from a college grad to a wife and mother. Life is an amazing thing when you live it with others.

Who are you doing life with? I do not mean every moment of every day, although I know people who do that, either formally as foster parents or informally simply by having an open door policy to their home. I am a little protective of my family time because as much as I love to mentor others, I love being a husband and dad more. Still, I have much time to share life with others, and my family is a big part of that.

There are ways you can do life with others in simple ways. Again, part of the reason for this book is to show you how to be a more effective mentoring without dramatically changing your schedule:

- Doing things you would ordinarily do anyway, just with them. Running errands. Going to the coffee shop. Cleaning your office. Doing yard work (hint: I pay guys for physical labor they do). Adjust your lifestyle to include people, not your calendar.
- Planning times to hang out that fit your lifestyle. I eat out with my family a good bit, but often we also invite others to join us.
- Let them experience your hobbies/free time. Let them see and experience all areas of your life and how to keep life in balance.
- Allow them to see how a godly man or woman interacts with and leads their family—this is particularly vital for single adults.
- Have them join you in a commitment to change. For instance, I have recently lost 35 pounds in a serious change of life commitment to exercise and diet. This fall I am leading a workout group that allows me to continue to progress, to encourage others, and to do it with people I want to help grow in Christ.

One of the byproducts of this type of mentoring helps people you mentor realize life does not consist of a stream of big, recognizable events for God, but the consistent, daily walk of faith. Please do not only take those you mentor to “cool” events or opportunities that will “wow” them. I regularly tell young

students who have the “speaking at the youth rally equals being a man of God” mindset to get a lunch pail and spend some time thinking of ministry as daily, faithfully doing what must be done for the glory of God.

Paul gives us a glimpse of this kind of consistent, lifestyle mentoring as he taught young Timothy.

“And the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also.” 2 Timothy 2:2

Paul also told Timothy to be like a soldier (2 Tim 2:3–4). A soldier understands the importance of serving others, both his commander and his country. Soldiers do life together exclusively during times of war. Soldiers understand authority and service.

In Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great* he studied companies that featured a dramatic and sustained turn around. He found principles consistent with Scripture. For instance, he described what he called a Level Five leader as the most effective. What are the primary traits of a L5 leader? One trait is an unwavering commitment to the company. The other, which was surprising to his research team, was the remarkable modesty and humility of the leaders of great companies compared to those whose companies exhibited mediocrity, as these quotes demonstrate:

In contrast to the very *I*-centric leaders of the comparison leaders, we were struck by how the good-to-great leaders *didn’t* talk about themselves. . . . When pressed to talk about themselves, they’d say things like, “I hope I’m not sounding like a big shot.” . . . Those who worked or wrote about the good-to-great leaders continually used words like *quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, understated, did not believe his own clippings*; and so forth. . . . The good-to-great leaders never wanted to become larger-than-life heroes. They never aspired to be put on a pedestal or become unreachable icons. They were seemingly

normal people quietly producing extraordinary results.<sup>4</sup>

Sounds like a pretty good description of the leadership style of Moses, or David, or Paul, or for that matter, our Lord Himself. In a day when CEO-driven, self-promoting pastoral models that imply one must be a Type A, ADHD overly aggressive type who has mastered all the leadership principles of the gurus of our time, we need more men of God who walk and lead in humility, and who open their lives to others.

### **Why This Matters (Why This May Be the Most Important Thing You Ever Do)**

If you are a parent, informal mentoring has its greatest power with your time involved in your own children. Just today my Hannah took me to the airport. Okay, first of all I cannot believe she is 17! We had the greatest talk. We spend a lot of time together. I have made time with our children top priority, not necessarily because I knew that it mattered, but in no small part because Michelle came from a broken home and I wanted to give our children a father's affection and training she did not have. But today we talked about stuff that matters—about life, about relationships, and about Hannah's influence informally mentoring others herself.

But whether it involves your children, which matters most, or anyone in whom you choose to invest, this could be the most important thing you ever do. Why? Because every person in whom you invest has been created in the image of God, created to worship the One who gives and sustains life. We in the church function like evolutionists too often, and that must cease. What do I mean?

For generations in the West we have lived in a culture of factories, where you are expected to do your job, put in your time, but not to get carried away. Just do your job. Such an attitude smacks of Darwinist survivalism, not Christian discipleship. But II Corinthians 5:16-17 reminds us we should not see the world from any other perspective but from that of a new creation in Christ. It goes on to say we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. God has created each of us in such a way that we can never be fulfilled until we come to God by grace

through faith; so we should never see ourselves as a cog in the universe or just a worker in the Western world; we are like artists who have been given gifts and abilities to use regardless of our vocation or location for the sake of the gospel and the glory of God.

So, as a mentor, you have the distinct honor of helping those you touch to see themselves not as a cog in an impersonal universe but as uniquely gifted, like artists called by God to serve Him. Example: while I do not mentor young ladies like I do young men (I spend a lot of time with young men alone, but only with young ladies as part of a group), some become close not only to me but also my family. One young lady named Sabrina serves tables in a local restaurant. She came to study at Southeastern, so she could see her job merely (as sadly too many do) as nothing more than a place to help pay the bills. But she approaches it with the vigor of an artist, and her patrons know it. She loves people, encourages well, and reflects Christ among her coworkers, often bringing them to our church services with her. I told her this week she is an artist. She never thought of it like that, I am guessing. But taking the personality you have and crafting it to bring a unique focus to your job, no matter what it is, demonstrates the kind of artistry God has given us.

Too many ministers, especially younger men, think traveling around the country and speaking to thousands of people marks real ministry success. It is so only if God calls you to do that. Believe me, having done it for years, it is not so glamorous. But even if you do that, you should be mentoring others. I would argue the greatest influencers for the long term are leaders who minister through a local church and give much attention to mentoring. I recently went on staff at my local church in no small part to give me an opportunity to mentor young leaders there.

As a mentor you do more than encourage and rebuke, though each matters a lot. You help the mentee spread his wings to soar for the glory of God. Your protégé needs three things desperately:

Encouragement/rebuke

A model to observe

Permission to follow Christ passionately and artistically

So as you run that errand, do that chore, or hang out at the coffeehop together, remember you are doing more than teaching a biblical principle, giving a practical insight, or encouraging. You are helping that person see how they can give themselves uniquely and redemptively in any given circumstance to the glory of God.

## Conclusion

### Getting WITH It

I hope this simple encouragement to be pouring into others has helped. I wanted you to consider another form of informal mentoring in conclusion: social media. I recognize as a professor, author, and minister I have opportunities some do not to connect with others. In addition, I am wired to be what Malcolm Gladwell calls a connector in his book *The Tipping Point*. I love networking as a means to encourage others in the gospel. So for me, another whole world of informal mentoring has come via Twitter, Facebook, and my blog [alvinreid.com](http://alvinreid.com). I constantly receive kind responses from people who tell me I mentor them at some level through my tweets, status updates, and blogs. I consider this to be a significant extension of the mentoring process.

I tweet, therefore I mentor.

It does not take a revolution in our lifestyle to be a mentor every day, but a refocusing of how we live daily. Please do not dishonor the Lord who created you to worship Him with your whole heart by adopting the attitude that you have nothing to give to others. You can be a mentor.

In fact, you must.

How then, do you choose those you will mentor? If you take the challenge to turn your routine of life into a mentoring lifestyle, how do you pick those you will intentionally pour into by taking them places, serving together, and to some level doing life together?

In *The Be-With Factor*, the acrostic READY offers a helpful method for discovering a mentee. Find someone who is:

Reliable

Excited

Authentic

Daring

Young

Do you have someone in mind? Are you running an errand in the next day

or two?

Pick up the phone.

Give them a call.

Take someone with you.

Questions to consider:

1. If you are not currently intentionally mentoring someone, what's keeping you from doing it?
2. Understanding the value Jesus placed on mentoring others, how should mentoring someone impact your life? Your family?
3. If you are mentoring someone, are you making the most of the opportunity? Do you feel as though you are genuine and living out what you are teaching?

For more resources go to [alvinreid.com](http://alvinreid.com).

For information on ministry training go to [sebts.edu](http://sebts.edu)

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<sup>1</sup> Bo Boshers and Judon Poling, *The Be-With Factor: Mentoring Students in Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> Kindle edition, Location 232.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Location 236.