

Mentoring - Jesus' 'world winning strategy'

My name is Mike Evans and I serve here as the Family Life Pastor at CCC. Before I get started - WINTER BLAST ANNOUNCEMENT. I want to share in this message about an issue so near and dear to the heart of God that it cost him the life of his Son, Jesus Christ. What is so near to God's heart that he would go to (arms wide) such lengths? Well the simple answer is people - you, and me. In the Scripture it says:

- John 3:16 - God so loved the WORLD (kosmos) that he gave his one and only son
- 1 Timothy 2:4 - this is good and pleases God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth
- 2 Pet.3:9 - God is patient with you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.
- Mt. 28:18 - Jesus command to his disciples to "go into the world and make disciples of all the nations (ethnos - people)."

If God's heart is that the nations, the peoples of the world, would come to know him, then that begs the question, "How is that going to happen?" Better yet, "How did Jesus get it started?" I want to talk about that, how Jesus got it done, and what we are entrusted to do as a result of what Jesus did, through a message I've entitled "Mentoring-Jesus' World-Winning Strategy"

I'd like to take this time with you and to talk with you about mentoring, which as I have studied and walked with the Lord for many years I have come to the conviction that mentoring people in the context of loving relationships is a hugely lost art in the church today. Yet this was and still is Jesus' primary strategy to seeing the world reached for Christ.

As a young Christian many years ago, the Lord brought into my life a mentor named Dave. Dave and myself and a group of 4 other high school students met with Dave every Friday morning at 6:00 a.m. for Bible study, discipleship, and prayer. But that wasn't all we did together. Dave taught me how to fish, how to shoot a bow, and so much more about life. We had a lot of fun together. Having lost my father at age 6 and in great need of a male role model in my life at the time, the Lord brought Dave to mentor me at a critical time in my life.

A few years later the Lord brought another wonderful mentor into my life. His name is Kevin, and here's how our mentoring relationship began. I arrived in California in January of 1992, green behind the ears and raring to go in ministry, though I was fully expecting to be working in an office for 6 months, then to begin ministering to students. But Kevin, my first day upon reporting to my ministry assignment, pulls me into his office and says, "Mike I don't know you at all (except for what I've read about you on paper) but how would you like to start working with students today?" I said "Sure" and off we went. Kevin as my mentor, me as his mentoree. Over the course of the next 18 months that ensued I learned so much from this man of God. I learned to love

old books by men like the Alan Redpath's and the Andrew Murray's and the Spurgeon's and the George Mueller's and the Hudson Taylor's of our history. I learned to have fun with students and to challenge them to achieve spiritual heights. I met Wendy, who became my wife in August of 1993, and Kevin coached me along through that relationship. He did our wedding and I am indebted to him so much for the impact he had on my life. More than anything I am so grateful to Kevin for the enormous amount of TIME he spent with me, modeling to me effective ministry, having fun together, and giving me the freedom to both succeed and to fail. One of the principles men like Kevin and Dave taught me is that there is simply no substitute for being with people, and it is ridiculous to imagine that anything less will develop strong Christian people.

But as neat a guy as Kevin was, I was equally impacted by his wife, Ginnette. Let me explain. At the time we began to get to know each other Ginnette was expecting their 5th child. I think it was August of that year, 1992, and I was over at the Young's house. Ginnette was 8 months along and I came in as the brash, obnoxious guy that I was (I know that you guys are having a lot of trouble imagining me like that) and I said, "Ginnette, how's it going?" She looked at me and said, "Mike my husband has been working a lot, training guys like YOU, my kids are all over the place, I'm 8 months pregnant-my back hurts, and my feet are killing me. Other than that I'm just great." I talked a little more and actually got out of there as fast as I could before Ginnette put me to work doing something more productive than just standing around talking while she had much more important things to do than talk to a punk kid like me.

PICTURE

I walked out to the driveway and was talking to Kevin and asked him, "Kevin, what's marriage really like? Give it to me straight." He looked at me and chuckled under his breath and said, "Well Mike it's great. But it's not like the movies. It's life in the mundane. It's about loving my God, my wife, and my kids. About sacrifice. It's taught me more about God and myself and how to treat people than anything else in my life. One day you'll understand what I'm talking about."

That conversation and really that whole relationship has marked my life. In fact I look on my life and what I see is a series of relationships in which people have invested in me and I have invested in people to see lives impacted for Jesus Christ, both mine and theirs. And this whole mentoring thing has worked both ways. I've been mentored, but I've also had the privilege of serving as mentor to many as well. Former students, of colleagues in former ministries and this one, of accountability partners and friends, and the more I think about it the more clearly it has been made apparent to me, that this life is about relationships.

When Jesus Christ voluntarily gave His life on the cross 2000 years ago, He did not die for a cause or an idea. He died for people. He died for you. He died for me. While he ministered on earth, he “ordained twelve men, that He might be with them, and that he might send them forth to preach (Mk. 2:14).” As Robert Coleman writes in his masterpiece, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, *When one stops to think of it, just letting his disciples follow Him was an incredibly simple way of training them. Jesus had no formal school, no Seminaries, no outlined course of study, no periodic membership classes in which he enrolled His followers. None of these highly organized procedures considered so necessary today entered at all into His ministry. Amazing as it may seem, all Jesus did to teach these men His way was to draw them close to Himself. He was His own school and curriculum (38)..One living sermon is worth a hundred explanation (39).*

One might think that as Jesus’ ministry was coming to an end, He would spend less time with His disciples, but the opposite is true. A close reading of the Gospels indicates that Jesus spent MORE time with His disciples in his second and third years, and he often took time alone with just Him and His disciples.

Before Jesus died on Calvary, Jesus prayed for these men extensively in John 17. Over 40 times in that High Priestly prayer, he referred to his 12 disciples. And after Jesus rose again and walked the earth another time, he appeared in every one of his ten post-resurrection appearances to His followers. He commissioned 11 of these men to take the message, the gospel of the Kingdom of God, of God’s love and forgiveness, to the ends of the earth. To make Disciples of the nations. To reach people who would reach people.

We look to the Scriptures and we see relationships all over the place - some healthy, some not so healthy. We think of:

- Jesus and the 12 disciples, and the 3 within that circle (Peter, James, and John) who was even closer to. We think of Jesus’ relationship with his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, who he spent time with and stayed with on numerous occasions.
- I think of Paul and his friendship with people like Barnabas and his mentoring relationship with men like Silas and Timothy and Titus, with couples like Priscilla and Aquila, who were so helpful to him in his ministry.
- I think of you...someone led someone to Christ and developed them in their faith to the point where they had a passion to lead someone else to the Lord and ultimately, if you know Jesus yourself, He most likely used a Christ-follower to lead you to faith and to help you grow. Maybe a parent, a trusted friend, a pastor or lay leader in the church, a co-worker. The point is that God is in the business of using people to impact other people for the sake of eternity and the furthering of His Kingdom’s work in using people to help you to grow and become more

like Christ. His methods have never changed and they never will. This life is about people. It's about relationships. That's the POINT of it all.

In working with young people for kids for so many years I have often been heard to say that the whole key in building a successful youth ministry is to cultivate an environment where kids can build Christian friendships and they can have a close relationship with a Christ-following adult. In working with "grown-ups" more recently I've learned that we aren't much different from our kids! We too need close friends. We too need people to look up to who we respect who can help us with life's important decisions. Many of us need mentors as much as our kids do, particularly the couples I have been interacting with. And here's something I have been tinking a lot about as I've been working so much with families this year...

If the Scripture's model is mentoring, discipling relationships, then what are we doing in the church to create an environment where our adults, young/old, single/married, are given the opportunity to be mentored and helped to have the kind relationships that would honor God by their success?

I would like to show you some things in the Scripture that might be old hat to many of you but to some the following three Biblical principles that I am going to present to you will be brand new. I call these "The World-Winning Strategy of Jesus." This is how we will see the world reached for Jesus Christ - there are no shortcuts, there is no easy way, and this is the way that Jesus laid out for His people. And it works.

2 Tim 2:1-9

1. CLOSE CONTACT CREATES DEEP IMPACT

The Biblical NORM is Investing in People. Let me give you an example. Paul had this young man, Timothy, who he had spent years mentoring. He called Tim his "true son in the faith. Paul wrote of Timothy in Philippians 2, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20I have **no one else like him**, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me." Paul loved this young man who had accompanied him on Paul's missionary journeys and was ultimately entrusted with the leadership of the church in Ephesus, an extremely important port city in that day. Paul LOVED this young man. He invested in him. Like Jesus invested in his disciples, Paul invested in this young man, and the fruit was evident as Ephesus became a thriving, world-impacting church through Timothy's leadership to the glory of God. He modeled ministry to Timothy and gave Timothy authority to lead the church. He wrote to Timothy in verses 1-2, "1You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2And the

things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” In other words, Paul is saying to Timothy - what I did with you, you do with these Ephesians, so they can take what you have taught them and teach it to others who would respond to the message!

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Remember - CLOSE CONTACT CREATES DEEP IMPACT

Why is parenting so important? Because those little buggers live in your house and you have the opportunity right in your home to invest in the next generation!

Why is it so important to get connected to other people through a Life Group or an ABF? Because we need to be connected to each other so the “big church” gets “small.” We need to be known. We are called to belong, not just to an organization, but to a group of people. We are created for community. The early church serves as our model, where those first Christ-followers together “broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-47).”

Why is it SO KEY to lovingly, prayerfully impact and influence family, friends, co-workers and people in your world for Christ? Because quite simply God calls people to Himself by His Spirit’s promptings, and people are the means by which He calls. People are God’s method. That has never changed and will never change.

Let me beat this point to death with one more illustration: I’m sure you have heard the phrase, “putting all your eggs in one basket.” Ever think that that’s exactly what Jesus did? He literally staked His whole ministry on (show the eggs) Simon, Andrew; James, Philip, Bartholomew, John, Judas Thaddeus, Thomas, Matthew, James, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. There was no plan B! This Jesus who could easily have had all the Kingdoms of men at his feet, did not play to the galleries, did not live to please the crowds, but lived to usher in a Kingdom, so he led men who could lead the multitudes. He invested in a few so that the multitudes, and ultimately the world, could be saved.

Like Paul invested in Timothy, like the early church did life together, we need to understand and apply this principle that CLOSE CONTACT CREATES DEEP IMPACT. Be with people!

The Second component to Jesus “world-winning strategy” is that His people would:

2. COUNT THE COST FOR THE WORTHY CAUSE OF CHRIST.

Verses 3-6. Paul tells Timothy that to follow Christ he will need to be:

- a. Focused like a soldier. To follow Christ one must be willing to endure hardship and to follow orders, undistracted by “civilian affairs” that will lead to disobedience and heartache.
- b. Consistent like an athlete. To follow Christ one must “compete according to the rules.” Again, there are no shortcuts to living a life that pleases God.
- c. Determined like a farmer. To follow Christ one must be “hardworking.”

Jesus put it this way, “If anyone would come after me, let him first deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, “Come follow me and I will make you Fishers of men.” That’s what they did. Perfectly? No. Did they always get it right? Not at all. But there came a time as recorded in John 6 in a town called Capernaum and he begins saying some difficult things to the Jews about eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the son of Man...they called it a “hard teaching.” And many of Jesus’ followers began to desert him, right and left. Jesus turns to the Twelve and says to them, “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the holy one of God.” These men understood that no matter how hard it was to get, following Jesus and the call he made on their lives was worth it. These “mentorees” understood this, that the call was not to follow an institution, or even a church, but a Person - Jesus Christ!

3. We reproduce what we are.

If I was to crack open one of these eggs, you do know what would come out of it, right? Not apple juice, not jelly, not chocolate mile. An egg comes out. Why? Because that’s what it is! Paul tells Timothy in verse 9 of chapter 2, “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.” Why did he remind Timothy of this? Because his aim in life was to be like Jesus. And in mentoring Timothy Paul’s goal was that Jesus would be lived out through Timothy’s life. Because what was good about Paul is the same thing that was good about Timothy and is the same thing that is good about you and me. That’s Jesus. The more we imitate Jesus with our lives, the more we look like him and the more we reach our primary call in life. And the more you are like Jesus the more you will reproduce him into the lives of others. I don’t think we have rejected Jesus’ World Winning Strategy. We have just forgotten or ignored it for too long.

When will we realize that ministry is not done by “the church,” but it is done by people, expressing God’s love, and God is a Person (Jesus), expressed by His Spirit through lives fully yielded to Him. We can have “teams” and “ministries” and even “committees,” but the work itself is done by people reaching and loving other people for Christ.

- It’s done by a dad who teaches his son about purity.
- It’s done by a mom who lovingly shepherds and protects her girl.
- It’s done by a child helping another child at school.
- It’s done by a student encouraging a discouraged friend in the cafeteria.
- It’s done by a couple helping a couple through a dark time in their relationship.

So what are you reproducing? How is your “fruit factor?” Are there people in the world who can look to you as a mentor or friend who point them to Jesus?

Let’s get SPECIFIC. First, I want to give those of you today who are or who plan to be married soon, a specific opportunity to get involved with something that is VERY critical and could be the most important relationship your marriage gets involved in. Then I would like to open up another opportunity that all of us can involve ourselves in, that will give you the chance to build relationships and to be mentored by other Christ-followers, whatever season of life you are in.

First, for the couples in the house. What relationship is it the hardest to apply these things for so many of us? Who gets the worst of us? Where are we the “most known,” where we can’t hide, where people are the least impressed with us? I think Paul understood us well, because he deals a lot in his writings with husbands and wives and how they treat one another at HOME!

It is at home where we:

- Have bedhead and bad breath
- Come home cranky after a long day at work (or welcome said spouse home after having a grueling day running errands, playing cook, chauffeur, and whatever else the needs are)
- Have no escape from people
- Show our moods
- Want to do what we want to do, when we want to do it
- Bottom line is that home is a place where Paul understood that our Christianity is put to the test...in the arena of the closest interpersonal relationships we have-with our spouse and our kids.

Marriage is the institution that has the potential to bring the greatest joy but also to cause the greatest pain, because it is a covenant, instituted by God, and when I say at the end of a wedding, “What God has joined together, let no one separate,” that is exactly what God’s design for marriage is. But I look out

at this audience and see so many couples who have been directly or indirectly affected by broken marriages and the pain that accompanies that heartbreak. And you know when you held his or her hand on that wedding day and they looked so good and everybody was so happy, you had no idea that you would end up where you maybe are today. You had no idea that it would be so hard. That that “loving feeling” would flee and you guys would really have to WORK at this marriage relationship thing. Well that’s what it is. It’s WORK. Anything worth having is worth working for.

And maybe you are getting going in your marriage, maybe you are wanting more from it, maybe you are in trouble...for those of you who are married - maybe you are asking, Mike, how in the world do I do this? How do I do this marriage thing? I think I need something to get me and my spouse kick-started. Maybe your marriage is just getting ready to happen or you’re in your first year or two and you’re just trying to figure this thing out.

Or if I was to sit with you over a cup of coffee and to ask you, “How is your marriage going?” You would say it’s going okay, but not great. Like you feel like you are missing something and need to get unstuck. Ever been there? I had someone ask me years ago, “If your marriage was no more dynamic and flourishing than your personal walk with God, then what would be the condition of your marriage?”

Or maybe your marriage is in real trouble and both of you know it. You’re both so stressed out you hardly communicate about anything any more, or you are struggling with intimacy issues or infidelity issues or infertility issues or blended family issues, or some other big one that has got your marriage in some serious repair.

We have prepared something very special for you...let’s take a look at a brief video to explain. VIDEO. We have dozens of couples that over the past six months have been involved with me in intensive training for just this moment. Whatever state you find your marriage in today, we want to come alongside you in your marriage relationship and to give you some encouragement, to connect you in private, personal relationship with a couple who has been a little further down the road than you and your spouse are. To make this happen we need you to do something. We need you to take the step to apply to be a part of a Marriage Mentoring relationship. It could be the most important decision you ever made for your marriage...it could give you the hope and be the catalyst to take your relationship to the next level.

You can apply in one of two ways - out in the middle of the lobby you will find a number of our marriage mentor couples. You can grab applications out there and meet some of the couples that have gone through our training who are just chomping at the bit to get to know you. Turn that in to our office this week or

to our table next weekend in the services and we will process it and connect you to a mentor couple as soon as we are able.

The second way would be to download a “pdf” of the application and to email it to the address on the application. mentorus@ccc.org

Another way to get connected that is available to all of us, no matter what season of life you are in, is through the dozens of Life Groups/small groups that are beginning this month. Through this opportunity you will be able to engage with wonderful people, to grow with, be mentored by, and do life with fellow Christ-followers. There are tables and folks in the lobby to answer your questions, so if you aren't going to apply for a marriage mentoring relationship, then get plugged in to a small group. Make an 8-12 week commitment and go from there and see where the Lord takes it. Our family got into a Life Group last fall - we meet on Saturday's after the 533 service - we call ourselves the 733 Life Group even though we never get started until 833. We're having a blast - six couples, like 60 kids it seems, doing life and growing in Christ together. Give yourself the opportunity to connect. You won't know unless you try!

I close with this thought/invitation: The world is desperately seeking someone to follow. That they will follow someone is certain, but who will that be for you? Will they follow one who knows the way of Jesus, or will he follow one that will lead him to greater darkness, hopelessness, and despair. This is the decisive question of life. The destiny of the world, maybe your marriage, hangs in the balance. What will you do about it? How will you respond?

Invitation.