

Spiritual Mentor: Encourage

Colossians 2:1-4

September 15, 2024

Rev Joe Sanders

First Baptist Church Coshocton, Ohio

Let me share three insights from our vacation. First, if you go on vacation to the beach and you don't think there will be sand, you'll make everyone miserable. Second, if you go on vacation and expect the weather to be perfect, you might become grumpy when the temperature is seventy five with a northerly wind of 25 mph. It felt like sixty to sixty-five. Third, if you make it through the week, get home safely, sleep in your own bed and wake up, you're blessed, because at anytime your spouse could have taken you out.

While on vacation I forgot to be encouraging. I was lax in being a spiritual mentor. A few weeks ago I shared with you a series of messages on glorifying God. Our purpose is to Glorify God. The easiest way is to open your mouth and sing. The most important way is to live your life for Jesus. The most influential way to glorify God is to be a spiritual mentor.

This is all important because as brothers and sisters of Jesus we are spiritual mentors. The basic level of mentoring is encouraging. But if there is nothing more than encouraging we don't grow spiritually. We need to also comfort when life stinks, and it does more often than not. We need to urge, advise, hold accountable those in our spiritual care.

Colossians 2:1-4 (NIV)

I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

Our purpose is glorifying God; our mission is living like Jesus; our strategy is being a spiritual mentor. We were saved for more than escaping hell or getting things from God. We have been saved from our sins to a new life. As redeemed people we can glorify God in many ways. I've already said this, and I'll say it a lot more, the most influential way to glorify God is to mentor others in their relationship with Jesus.

We are mature Christians. I'm not talking about age. I'm talking about our spiritual depth, we are no longer infants in Christ. Some of us are living in smaller circles of influence each year. There are fewer people in our circle of family and friends who don't know Jesus. The influence we have has grown smaller.

I bring this up because we can't be like leaves on a tree, blown around by the wind. We have to be intentional about how we live for Jesus. What captures the power of the wind and lets the wind propel it forward? A sailboat crew is intentional about knowing the direction of the wind, and where they need to go, and then harnesses the wind to get their. You don't have to be a sailor to understand this. We know it's the reality. Since we have been saved to glorify God we can be intentional about mentoring the people in our circle in their faith in Jesus.

This letter was written to people who knew the good news of Jesus Christ. They were men and women and children who faced temptations. What was a mystery, salvation from our sins, was revealed as faith in Jesus who lived, died, and rose again. The people heard this Good News. They believed the Good News. They wanted to glorify God. They struggled knowing the truth from the lies.

There were false teachers who wanted to deceive them. Their deception was for personal gain and to draw believers away from Jesus. The believers needed to be encouraged to know more of the truth about Jesus. They needed to be mentored. The apostle Paul's letter to them was meant to begin that mentoring process.

Not many of us are evangelist, but we can be encouragers with the truth, be comforters with God's love, and advisors to be accountable. No matter how big or small our circle of influence, there are people who need to grow in their faith. I have not arrived at all that Jesus wants of me as His brother. The same is true for you. It's true for all of us.

Our lives are about bringing glory to God, which means that as long as we are in these human bodies, we have room grow. There is no vacation from glorifying God. It's too easy for us to say, I'm taking a vacation from Jesus, I'm going to do what I want. That's when we need to hear from our mentor. That's when we need to be encouraged by the truth. That's when we need to be told Jesus is watching us and watching over us. Life is not about you first, but Jesus first, for His glory.

Colossians 3:1 (NIV84) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Not everyone is born hopeful, but everyone can be empowered to encourage others. Even the most spiritual Christians fall back to the sin criticism, or negativity, or procrastination, or being workaholic.

The good news is we have been raised with Jesus from our sins and death. We have been given a new life. Now, in glorifying God we set our minds on the things of heaven, the things of God. We are no longer slaves to all the sin that was in our past.

Regardless of our personality, we are now empowered by the Holy Spirit. This means we can be encouragers and we can help one another, by mentoring each other. So we set sail, capturing the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in our faith.

There are enough people who only want to avoid hell or ignore hell. They need to be growing in their faith. They need to be moving along with the Holy Spirit. We all need encouragement.

Paul was mentored by more than one person. One of them was Barnabas. This was his nickname, it meant encourager. He encouraged Paul in numerous ways. Paul was a legalist before Jesus. He grew up and became a Pharisee, who was known for never breaking any rules and always persecuting people who didn't keep the rules. He was even a persecutor of Christians before He was saved.

Jesus put people in his life that we could mentor him, help him grow in his faith. He became an encourager, He became a mentor, and He was also an evangelist. Paul mentored people named

Tychius, Aristarchus, Mark, Timothy, and Luke. He shared with them the truth about Jesus, about their own lives, and the promises of God.

Encouragement is more than you can do it, because it's encouragement in the truth. If we mentor people with encouragement that they can do anything they want, then our mentoring is shallow. Our disciples will be shallow.

Being a Spiritual Mentor is always pointing others toward Jesus. Spiritual mentoring grows out of our relationship with Jesus. Spiritual mentoring is centered upon Jesus.

I need spiritual mentors. My faith grows stagnant unless my mentor points out to me that I'm not living according to the truth. The first two truths are that we've been raised from our sins to new life, and we need to focus on the things of God.

Regardless of your sins – murderers and mother stabbers or being a liar and selfish – we need mentoring into the things of God. We need encouragement to know the promises of God. We need encouragement to live in the promises of God.

Let me turn your thoughts one hundred eighty degrees. Who was or is your spiritual mentor? Take a second and write down those names. How did they encourage you to grow in your faith or put it this way, live according the leading of the Holy Spirit? I would encourage you to write down the answers to those questions. This is how you might be a mentor to another Christian. What you have learned from your Spiritual mentor, how you were encouraged in your faith are how you can mentor others. These are things you can pass on to other believers, so that they will be encouraged as they face life's daily realities.

Colossians 3:12 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Christians and sinners need to hear the hope and joy of Jesus. It's not just teachers, coaches, and chaplains that can be spiritual mentors. Every person who has made the choice to turn from their sin and to love Jesus is a Spiritual mentor. We encounter people everyday who need to grow in their faith in Jesus. We have relationships with people who need to hear the encouraging truth about their sin and about the grace of Jesus.

Don't merely discount your capacity to be a mentor because your circle of influence is shrinking. Acknowledge that you are saved, redeemed, and delivered. Claim your place as one who is called to glorify God. Take the step of faith to encourage those around you with hope and joy.

As Spiritual mentors may each one of us be compassionate and kind. Nobody wants to follow an angry and mean person. That is unless they intimidate you and you fear them. That's not mentoring, that's bullying. There's enough of that in our world right now.

Be compassionate not only with your words but also in your actions. We learn by what we see, right? The kindness that we do in the littlest of things is seen and heard. You're realizing you've been mentoring already, right? As you have moved along with the Holy Spirit, being transformed from a sinner into an imitator of Jesus, you have influenced others. Spiritual mentors take their words and their actions seriously. They are intentional about what they do and about what they say.

You can pray for Jesus to bring you people you can mentor. That might be scary, because you still aren't sure you're a Spiritual mentor. You are by the grace of Jesus a Spiritual mentor. Ask Jesus to bring people into your life to mentor.

The people you encounter are going to need encouragement. That means they will be confused. They will be headed in the wrong direction. They will be saying things that aren't glorifying God. They may not at first want to be encouraged. Therefore begin by being humble. You were once in their shoes. Think about what you would have wanted a mentor to say or do to help you.

Be gentle, not critical or harsh. Don't be like me, the bull in the China shop. Don't break them before you even start. Be ready to be rejected. You didn't want to hear the truth at first. You rebelled and pushed back. Be patient, plant seeds and water them. Be patient, then plant some more seeds and water them. The Holy Spirit will bring the harvest. If you are seeking to glorify God, by living like Jesus, the most influential thing you can do is mentor another person.

Colossians 4:2–3 (NIV84) Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

Make it your habit to remove criticism, and be an encourager in Jesus' name. Make the top of your prayer list, as a spiritual mentor, to be encouraging in the name of Jesus. We are all at the place in life where each day is less about us and more about others. Our buttons are still going to get pushed. Jesus has been working you through those situations all of your life. Now is the time in our lives to be more focused on encouraging others with the truth about Jesus.

As we are face to face with the moments to be critical or encouraging remember you are forgiven and empowered; you are a spiritual mentor; and the person in front of you is loved by Jesus.

So, I'm saying all this like I've arrived. But you know me and you know I haven't arrived. The Holy Spirit has put on my heart this truth that we are to glorify God. Our strategy as individuals and as a church is to be spiritual encouragers. I want to influence sinners and Christians alike to trust Jesus. I want my life to be an example of Jesus to those who see and hear me. If they are sinners, I want each person to turn from their sin and turn to Jesus. If they are Christians, I want each believer to be more intimate with Jesus.

I have to be intentional about this each day. The days when I am not intentional about being a Spiritual mentor I miss the opportunity to bless those around me. I have to continually pray that Jesus will speak to me and through me.

Jesus is the only one who change lives. No matter who is in your circle of influence or who crosses your path Jesus can change their lives. We all look good to one another on Sunday morning, right? But then there are the times when we don't feel well, or we're confused, frustrated, or just ready to quit. Jesus is still your answer. Not just any answer, Jesus is the only answer. Jesus is your hope and peace. Jesus is your joy and salvation. Jesus is your strength.

Jesus wants to empower your life. He lived on this earth, lived our lives empowering people just like us. Jesus wants to save you from yourself and your sin. He took on your sin as His sin, as the only one who never sinned. He died for your sin, my sin so that we wouldn't have to face the punishment of our sins.

Jesus loves you. You can love Jesus. You can give your life to Jesus by asking Him into your life. You can acknowledge, own your sin by giving it to Him, and He will forgive you and turn your heart toward Him. Amen.