

LE. 5 Mentoring Summary

Who is Speaking into my life to help me grow?

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Finding a mentor is something that enhanced my spiritual and emotional development during this class and in my current ministry as a

pastor. Of course, the current pandemic and my mentor's job at one of the airlines made it very difficult to meet face to face but the meetings that we did have over the phone were no less valuable. I asked brother Doug to be my mentor because he was a pastor for numerous years, he was a seminary professor and he has a refreshing perspective on what the church is and how it should grow. He strives to encourage congregants of the church to become disciples of Christ both in word and in action. During one of our mentoring sessions he poignantly pointed out that "the church is not for us to defend or protect" and "heaven is not a destination but a relationship with God. Our destination is God himself". Although not part of our reading for this course, I did read *Letters to the Church by Francis Chan* and I was impressed by the simplicity of getting back to the basics of what the new testament church was and how it developed through the homes of "ordinary" Christians. Growing up in the Church of Christ background I was always told that we are a "new testament" church, but for some reason as I learned through reading and the talks that I had with Doug there seemed to be a disconnect between what we are saying and what we are doing as a church. Over the years I witnessed our church (and many others) transform into (for lack of a better word) a Christian club. There was a comfort of tradition that led to a consumerist mentality or rather a feeling of ownership; of keeping certain traditions or holding so tightly to the past that it was suffocating the growth of the members of the church and the church itself. There is nothing inherently wrong with tradition, but there is a problem when it insulates or suffocates people from growing as disciples of Christ.

These issues of course led to my admission that several of my sin patterns were rearing their ugly heads when dealing with long term members of our church family. I expressed my difficulty with anger, pride, frustration, doubt, impatience, and I am sure many more that I do not remember or have yet to unearth. Doug assured me that this was not uncommon being a pastor but encouraged me to remember that we are not

in control of all that happens in the church despite what the board members or congregants may think. I struggled in the beginning of our mentoring sessions because I think that I had a reluctance to expose the false self and most importantly the religious false self that can be so deviant and difficult to root out in my life. Stepping into the role of a pastor I found a weight of responsibility that was a bit unnerving, there are so many expectations of who a pastor should be, look or act like. I understand that there are of course biblical guidelines but the expectations of the congregation and even my close friends and family seemed to be above and beyond those guidelines. There is such a temptation to put on a mask and become an actor (to rely upon the religious false self) instead of being a true disciple of Christ. I had to admit that there were a lot of times that I did not believe that I should be in a leadership role and I found myself reverting to the lies that I believed in the past. That I was not good enough or even worse that I might be better than my neighbor because at least I go to church. Over time and reflection especially during my moments of silence I realized that there is a difference between “going to church” and “being the church”. I was reminded by Doug during one of our conversations that it can be lonely being in a leadership position in ministry because no one wants to hang out with the pastor. There is a mask that people want to place upon pastors that we have the choice whether to accept or not. We can live out our lives as the person God intended us to be or we can fall prey to pleasing everyone’s expectation of who we should be. He explained that I needed to make the effort to find friends that will allow me to be me and to take the time to enjoy life. He also advised me to keep my day job in construction because, one: it gives me a place to evangelize, two: it makes me relatable to the lay members of the church, three: it prevents me from becoming too dependent on a paycheck from the church and less dependent upon God and His word (another words my livelihood will not be threatened because I speak the truth that someone may not want to hear). I was encouraged through our conversations to really examine what I was preaching, the

decisions that I was making and the vision that God wants to convey to me as a leader. God will not give me more than I can handle, and He knows that I am a human that will make mistakes. Regardless of my errors in judgement or action God loves me because of who I am and the role that he is leading me to is something that He controls not anyone else including myself.

We also examined the danger of believing that success is due to the programs and individual efforts that we put out while we serve God. There is an idea that because we are pastors; evangelism, church growth, mentoring, discipleship and any administrative duties become the sole responsibility of the pastor. There is a distorted view of the role of church and church leadership and it can bring us to a point of burn out, discouragement and resentment. These were things that Doug experienced in his several years as a pastor and he warned me to find constructive ways to build responsibility, discipleship, new leadership and to properly delegate tasks in order to ensure that people within the church can do their part to serve and that I do not burn out. Some of the practical ways that this can be done is through small discipleship groups that encourage and equip participants to start their own groups (much like the early new testament church). There is an intimacy that is developed through these groups that takes the focus off the “professionals” (pastors, worship leaders, youth leaders, etc.) and places it not in a church building or program but in the home of the individual Christian. There is nothing wrong with buildings or programs but there is a danger in leaving the duties and commands that Jesus gave to all his followers to a select group of professional individuals.”

Reflecting on my times of stillness, I admit that initially I did not have any major moments of clarity or any eureka moments. However, there was a small peace during those brief times in the day that I could just sit read and reflect. Practicing stillness can be very difficult in the lives that we all lead but I believe that is the point that Madame Guyon was attempting to make; it

should not be our priority to lead our own lives but to allow God to lead our lives. Taking the time to read God's word, to pray His word and to be still and listen are the disciplines that have brought me to a closer relationship with Jesus. I pray that I do not falter or resist practicing these disciplines which draw me closer to knowing God.

Practicing the spiritual disciplines throughout this class allowed me to find moments in my busy life to focus on God and what He wants for my life. This almost sounds strange to write but I realize that there is a temptation to try to run ahead of God or to think that somehow, I have reached the spiritual growth goal of my life. I realize that spiritual development is a lifelong endeavor and that the journey is so much easier with Jesus leading me on the path than if I try to force or control things myself. Trusting in God is a work in progress in my life, but I also know that I am not the only one on the path. It is good to have a mentor that can catch some of the blind spots that I miss in my life, to be the coach in my corner, to encourage me when I fall down, and to show me some of the pitfalls that they had to suffer through so I do not have to make the same mistakes. It took me a long time to realize the value of mentorship, as a man I like to think that I can handle things on my own, but the older that I get the more I realize that having wise counselors in your corner is much smarter than not. "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days" Proverbs 19:20 (NASB)