



by Tara Kenyon

As ministers, educators, and leaders, we frequently utilize the terms “mentoring” and “discipleship” somewhat interchangeably to describe the activity of sharing spiritual wisdom or information gleaned through study and experience. In secular contexts, mentoring describes the exchange of practical life information and situational wisdom. Mentoring may or may not include a spiritual element whereas discipleship ALWAYS focuses on the spiritual development and growth of another. I am honored to share with you some of my own thoughts on the purpose and value of both.

Jesus **commanded**, “Go and make disciples of all nations” we believe in both the micro and macro implications of His command. As missionaries, we have committed to the macro, working to declare the good news to the nations. As educators, we are committing intensely to the micro by making individual disciples one by one.

I remember Dr. Beth Grant pleading with our candidate missionary class to genuinely understand the responsibility and full-time commitment that is “making disciples”. Oftentimes, when committing to a new life in Christ, many are accepting to be cast-out of their own families and cultural or faith communities. Others quickly surpass the faithful who led them to Christ due to supernatural growth and need to be guided and counseled as the Lord of the harvest leads them to uncharted territories. They need sound leaders willing to pour into them, encourage them, and lovingly include them, sometimes as part of their very own family.

Mentoring, while requiring time and some level of commitment from the mentor, seems rather inviting as it allows one to share their expertise and pour into someone else, thus building a legacy of all he or she has learned in life. This is rather appealing to one’s ego in that we have a captive audience, appreciative and complimenting of how smart and wise we are. We are knowingly viewed as one having power and influence over someone willingly subordinate. It

is a necessary and positive element included in discipleship yet, as people of the Spirit, I believe we are called to a more intentional and supernatural relationship with those we lead.

Making disciples, on the other hand, is a supernatural command and thus requires supernatural impartation. It contradicts our selfish and self-serving tendencies and requires sacrifice and humility as we get into the complicated and imperfect lives of those we have been called to serve. Where mentoring assists people in becoming successful, discipleship brings the Kingdom and sovereign reign of Christ on earth. Jesus exemplified his desired model of discipleship when he dedicated every moment of his time during his last three years on earth to serving and guiding those who would carry the good news to the ends of the earth.

Kingdom-building discipleship requires spiritually sound leaders planning for a future where he or she does not exist and kingdom work must dynamically continue without their guidance. Vision and foresight for the future assists the leader in maintaining the focus on making disciples and loving the lost rather than the discomfort of sharing and relinquishing control and influence.

What a privilege and responsibility the Father has given us in allowing us to participate in the discipleship of others! Not unlike raising our own children, we must commit to life-long participation, influence, and the serving of those around us. This relationship occurs so naturally within the classrooms in which so many of us have the privilege of teaching. May we never settle for only mentoring those the Lord has placed in our life. Let us seek the supernatural impartation present in discipleship and commit anew to raising a generation that serves with humility and gives their lives in the service of discipling others.

- How about you? What have your experiences been either as a mentor/mentoree or as a discipler/disciple?
- Have you had any discipleship experiences that you would call supernatural? What was it like?
- How about a mentoring relationship that simply fell flat? What happened?

Let us know in the comments below: