Mentors Model Leadership, Train Disciples, and Transmit Love

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Jesus was a mentor. He gathered common people—both men and women—and lifted their sights to the needs of the world.

Jesus called people and they followed him. He prayed for them and with them. He encouraged them and challenged them. He sent them out on applied assignments and taught them about God. In all these ways the Kingdom of God advanced.

Jesus was a mentor, and he invites his followers to be the same for others.

Mentorship operates on many levels, but it happens uniquely within a spiritual relationship. The role of the Christian mentor is not to bring the learner to oneself, but to bring learner and learned alike to the feet of Jesus.

Bringing people to the eternal Word of God is always the most transformative. When that happens, all things indeed become new, and the world is seen through new eyes.

As Thomas Kelly (A Testament of Devotion, New York: Harper & Row, 1941, p. 32) puts it, “Yield yourself to Him who is a far better teacher than these outward words, and you will have found the Instructor Himself, of whom these words are a faint and broken echo.”

From simply a life-improving to a life-changing endeavor, the best mentors are those continuing to learn of Christ as maturing disciples themselves. That kind of person is exciting to be around!

I call this “the contagion of discovery.” Anyone who is truly engaged in learning more from the Lord becomes a vehicle for redemptive change in the lives of others.

One of my dearest mentors was Don Green. Don had just come back from seminary at Princeton, and his learnings were contagious.

From Don I heard stories about early Christian martyrs and those who stood with Christ against the demands of Rome: “I am a Christian; therefore, I cannot fight!” This moved me as I considered registering as a conscientious objector.

Don inspired me with stories about George Fox, John Woolman, and Joseph John Gurney—early Friends who were obedient to Christ. I was especially fascinated by the children of Reading meeting, who continued to meet after their parents and other adults had been thrown into prison—simply for being Quakers.

Don prayed with me. We discussed life’s important decisions together. Through those conversations God worked. I felt more clear about directions to pursue and I grew in wisdom regarding how to make important decisions.

Jesus was a mentor. In following his example, we offer the learnings we have received from others to emerging generations of leaders. In so doing, we join a blessed community of humble learners in the school of Christ.

Consider being part of the advancement of the Kingdom through a mentoring relationship. Ask God for direction. Then watch and see what God will do.

—Paul Anderson, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Biblical and Quaker Studies at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. Paul authored the recently published book, The Christology of the Fourth Gospel, available from Trinity Press International, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851, at a cost of $25.

Inside . . .

Our theme in the winter ’98 issue is Mentoring, Modeling, and Motivation—Steps to Developing Leadership. You’ll discover how a Life Transformation Group in California can lead to spiritual growth for a barber named Steve (see story on page 8).

You’ll read how Margaret Fell modeled the Christian life to early Friends in England, and how Alan Weinacht was challenged as a young man to follow Christ into the pastoral ministry by his pastor (look on page 2).

In the news sections you’ll see snapshots from E/FIA regions and from around the world showing Friends involved in Kingdom work.

These are the sorts of stories that Becky Towne, editor of The Friends Voice, will be sharing with you as this publication seeks to define and share the identity and mission of the Evangelical Friends.