

Talking on Purpose

By Viki Rife

The young woman looked like my former student. She acted like my former student. She even sounded like her. But she couldn't be.

It had been fifteen years since I had seen her. I remembered her as a quiet middle-schooler who seemed painfully uncomfortable even answering a question in class. So even though I saw the name of my former student on the program, and heard her voice, it was hard to believe it was really her.



When I had a chance to talk with Ann (not her real name) later, I asked her what had changed. She smiled, "I learned to talk on purpose." She went on to explain that an older woman had shown an interest in her and asked her thought-provoking questions. "She was so understanding," the young woman went on to say. "I felt safe with her, like she really cared about my well-being and my future."

The older woman had become a sounding board as Ann navigated the challenges of her mother's illness and eventual death.

"She was my mentor, but it wasn't anything official. I just knew I could call her when I needed to talk. Sometimes we'd go to a coffeehouse and just talk about life. I knew that any answers she gave had my best interest at heart. Most of the time, however, she just asked insightful questions that helped me see the situation through another perspective."

"She cared deeply about people. Her kindness helped me see that you don't have to be a big answer person to be a mentor. You just have to love God and love people.

"I found myself wanting to bless others the way she blessed me. So I started paying attention to the younger girls in church, wondering what might be happening behind their teenage attitudes. I learned to seek them out, to ask them questions with real curiosity about their lives. The next thing I knew, they were calling me when they needed to talk.

"But you were so shy," I exclaimed. "How is it that now you're speaking for large audiences?"

She laughed. "When I started to wonder what other people needed, I became less and less conscious of myself. It's hard to be afraid of people when you're really interested in what's happening in their soul, at their deepest level. I found myself developing a passion to help others, and now I speak to other women on the value of mentoring or discipling.

"I believe mentoring is a huge part of the Great Commission. Christ told His followers in Matthew 28:19, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' We have an example in the way He developed His own disciples by spending time with them, answering their questions from God's perspective. We have so much access to a person's heart when we show an interest in them and let them into our heart!

“We as women have a valuable role in the Great Commission. I’m especially moved by how Titus 2:3-5 talks about the older women being responsible to teach the younger women how to live godly lives. Why don’t more women see the potential of this?”

Have you ever wondered what your role is in the Great Commission? You may be called to be a discipler, to help others follow Christ. Here are a few keys that can make us more effective.

1. Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38). Ask how you can be a part of preparing other women to be harvesters.
2. Don’t stress. This is a natural part of one generation helping another grow in Christ. God has a way of matching up people who need each other. God has put you in that person’s life for a reason. Just be willing to share what you have learned about Him.
3. Be humble and teachable—learn from your mentee. God intends for our relationships to be mutually edifying. Admit what you don’t know and receive enthusiastically what God has to teach you about Himself through the other person.
4. Be a friend. This is not meant to be a program. Share life together and God will provide the opportunities to learn together. Remember, a true friend will both affirm you and confront you in love.
5. Don’t expect it to last forever. If it does, fine. But sometimes God calls us to be an influence in someone’s life for a specific time. Do whatever He shows you to do and be willing to let go when it’s time.
6. Encourage your mentee to involve other mentors in her life. An effective mentor cannot be possessive.

Making disciples should be as natural to God’s children as breathing. Our walk with God matters enough to be shared with others. After all, it’s all about Him, not us.