MENTORING: HOW TO EQUIP AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS
Training Followers Who Will Be Future Leaders

“Mentoring” is a buzzword these days. The business world loves the term, but what does mentoring mean in the church?

Mentoring is one believer intentionally investing in another believer to help him or her become more like Christ. It’s discipleship the way Jesus and Paul did it.

Jesus and Paul made disciples through mentoring. They prayerfully watched for potential mentees, initiated relationships with them, trained them, corrected them as needed, and then released them to do ministry themselves. They modeled for us what we need to be doing today, especially when we remember how others have helped us grow.

This study focuses on the mentoring relationship between Paul and Timothy. It’s only an introduction to the topic, but you’ll get enough to start mentoring. Someone probably helped you in your walk with Christ; now you can do the same.

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MENTORING

The Point
Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

The Bible Meets Life
Mentoring is nothing new. Businesses benefit when someone with experience walks alongside and trains someone with less experience. Some industries refer to masters and apprentices. But mentoring goes back to the earliest days of the church. It’s called discipleship: one believer walking alongside another to help him or her grow in Christ. We all need mentors, and we all have the opportunity and privilege to help someone else grow. God can use us to help others grow in Christ.

The Passages
2 Timothy 2:1-2; 3:10-17

The Setting
Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a Roman prison. He apparently already had been or shortly would be condemned to death at the hands of notorious Roman Emperor Nero. This last known letter of the apostle was directed toward his friend, son in the faith, and protégé Timothy. Paul sought to pass along to the young preacher many pastoral instructions and guidelines. He did by written word what he had done so intentionally through the years—mentored one who would take his place.

DISCUSS: Draw attention to the picture on PSG page 80 and ask Question 1: What’s something interesting you learned to do because somebody showed you how?

GUIDE: Refer members to “The Bible Meets Life” (PSG, p. 81), and share the story of the man in his 70s who received advice from his 90-something mentor.

SAY: “Sometimes it helps to have someone provide advice and guidance in the journey of life.”

GUIDE: Introduce The Point on PSG page 81: Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

RECAP: Refer to “The Bible Meets Life” to point out how both businesses and churches benefit from mentoring relationships.
2 Timothy 2:1-2

1 You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

**Verse 1.** Saul (Paul) was a one man wrecking crew with a personal mission to destroy Christianity or what some called “the Way” (Acts 9:2) after he witnessed the stoning of Stephen (7:58). After his encounter with Jesus Christ on the Damascus road (9:1-30), Paul began his mission to build the kingdom of God by traveling from town to town sharing the message of salvation through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul’s new passion took him many places. He helped countless Jews and Gentiles say yes to Jesus Christ as Lord. His strategy was to start churches in every town he visited. Paul began these churches by building intentional relationships with people he met. Through these relationships, Paul would share the gospel message and many people would become Christians. Paul then mentored certain converts who would become leaders in the churches; when Paul moved to the next place, the new leaders would remain and take over for Paul. Like Jesus Christ, Paul became a mentor to a handful of special men. After his death, they would continue the mission to make disciples of all the nations.

One of Paul’s best students was Timothy. Timothy had been raised in a religious home with consistent and loving instruction from the Word of God. Having served under Paul’s leadership for many years, Timothy’s leadership in the church at Ephesus still had numerous challenges, including theological differences and ungodly behavior. Paul wanted Timothy to train leaders, allowing Timothy to move forward to the next place of service, while having trained his replacement to be ready to serve. These pressures drove Timothy into periods of discouragement and frustration. In 2 Timothy, Paul shared some final instructions and some much needed encouragement. If you listen closely to Paul’s words you can imagine the joy he wanted to impart upon Timothy. Paul reminded Timothy that the Word of God would be his comfort and strength to win the daily battles and ultimately the war against
Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

the enemies of God. Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison which would be Paul’s final imprisonment prior to his death. This letter was written no later than AD 67-68. Some scholars refer to this letter as Paul’s last will and testament.

Accountability is a big part of mentoring and without it the goals of these partnerships go unreached. Paul had a unique tool to hold Timothy accountable. Paul’s words are inspired Scripture and remain true for all eternity. Timothy’s instructions will be known and imitated by other Christ followers for all time. Paul’s mentoring of Timothy can serve as the current-day readers’ mentoring guide. Paul addressed Timothy, his student, by You, followed by therefore. Therefore reminds the reader that Paul was referring back to something previously stated. In this case Paul likely referenced his teaching from 2 Timothy 1:13-14. There Paul told Timothy to hold on to the pattern of sound teaching he had heard from Paul. Paul continued, revealing the close nature of his relationship with Timothy by referring to him as my son. This does not mean Timothy was Paul’s literal son, but it conveys Paul’s fatherly concern for Timothy’s future and the effectiveness of his mission as he served the Lord, even in difficult circumstances. This expression builds the emotional aspect of Paul’s words since the present-day reader knows of Paul’s impending death. These are Paul’s last words to Timothy; as we read them our emotions are on edge hoping Timothy follows this advice.

The most powerful statement in this passage is be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul reminded Timothy that the source of his strength was not self but God’s grace. Paul’s powerful reminder was to affirm that God’s grace is not only for salvation by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, but it also refers to the totality of all that God provides to the believer from the point of salvation through all eternity. Everything we receive from God is based upon the work of Christ Jesus and not of ourselves. We are saved by grace and live in grace. There can be no greater encouragement than to know that Christ followers are strong because of God’s grace.

GUIDE: Refer group members to PSG page 83 to the three things Paul challenged Timothy to do in these verses:

• Be strong in grace.
• Teach others all he had learned from Paul.
• Challenge them to teach another generation of followers.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to Bible Commentary to provide more insight into these verses.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Prior to the session, find a “How To” book. During the session, display the book and say, “The title of this book is How To …. Just by reading the title, you know what this book is about. Let’s compare this teaching method with mentoring. What advantages might mentoring have over a book?” Guide the group to conclude that mentoring provides interaction and encouragement, allows the mentees to ask questions, provides a tangible model, and any other advantages they might present.
Verse 2. What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses reveals more proof that Timothy had developed a close relationship with Paul while they traveled together as Paul preached. Timothy was an eyewitness and disciple of Paul. The key for Timothy was that he reproduce and perhaps expand Paul’s work. Whatever method Timothy used to record or remember Paul’s words would be vital for his ministry as he recalled the lessons Paul had provided. Watching Paul and serving as his replacement would be vastly different. Like any good teacher, Paul reminded Timothy he had already been shown what do and say. As Timothy contemplated the great tasks that filled his future, Paul wanted Timothy to be strengthened by God’s grace to accomplish his mission.

A key concept in this phrase relates the importance of finding the right people with whom to establish a mentoring relationship. These relationships are not random. Paul offered specific instructions. Timothy was to commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. The term rendered commit means to place beside or set before. It is important to note that if Timothy’s student refused to have students of his own, Timothy’s work with that student would be deemed a failure. The mentor has to focus on the student and the student’s students.

God entrusts us with the gospel. We are to guard it and share it with the next generation. Timothy was to teach others who must then teach still others. Later in this letter Paul urged Timothy to leave Ephesus and join him in Rome (4:9). For Timothy to leave, it was critical that he entrusted to others the things he had heard from Paul. Those to whom he entrusted the teachings were to be reliable, trustworthy people. This passage focuses on a four-step progression of leadership: from Paul, to Timothy, to faithful men, and finally to others. If one step were missed, the mission failed. This seems to be a clear and easy assignment. As a believer in Christ, someone helped you grow in Christ and in turn you must intentionally help others grow.

DISCUSS: Question 2 (PSG, p. 83): When has someone taken you under their wing to help you grow spiritually?

LEADER PACK: Distribute copies of Item 6: Mentoring handout. Invite group members to take a moment to fill in the blanks with names of individuals who have mentored them and whom they have mentored to follow the pattern established by Paul’s example with Timothy.

DISCUSS: Question 3 (PSG, p. 84): What are some ways we can intentionally pass on what we believe to others?

Alternate: Who has had a significant role in your spiritual growth and development?

TRANSITION: “Next we will see how Paul invited Timothy to follow his example.”
Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

**2 Timothy 3:10-13**

10 But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance,

11 along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured—and yet the Lord rescued me from them all.

12 In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived.

**Verses 10-11a.** As Paul’s relationship with Timothy continued through the years, they witnessed each other facing ever-increasing challenges that served to strengthen their bonds. It is important to understand that, just as 2 Timothy 2:1-2 and 3:10-17 are connected in this commentary, so Paul revealed to Timothy a progression of difficulty of service to Christ Jesus to fulfill his mission. As Christ followers strive to live godly lives in Christ Jesus, a bright light shines upon their lives. A measure of praise may be put upon the person, but also the level of danger and difficulties rise. Paul wanted to remind Timothy that only by the grace of God would he be able to fulfill his mission of teaching the Word of God and endure these increasing pressures and fierce resistance.

3 **But you have followed my** ... indicates Timothy watched from a front row seat as the great apostle accomplished some of the most heroic and historic missionary work in the annals of Christianity. In this passage there are basically two types of activities Timothy witnessed. First, Paul demonstrated seven actions that would benefit his audience: his teaching, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God; his conduct, how he presented himself in his daily activities; his purpose, his motivation for service (his commission from Jesus Christ); his faith, his faithfulness to his mission and to his Lord Jesus Christ; his patience, his forbearance toward people and the circumstances within which he worked; his love,
for Jesus who commissioned him and for the people who needed forgiveness of sin by faith alone in the grace of God; and finally his **endurance**, his ability to continue his work regardless of the circumstances. Secondly, Paul shared that he had to endure two specific types of attacks: **persecutions** and **sufferings**. Although these difficulties were not unique to Paul, his list of persecutions and sufferings are found in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. Paul added for emphasis several places where he was significantly persecuted: Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

**Verse 11b.** The phrase *yet the Lord rescued me from them all* is one of the most powerful encouragements in all Scripture. Keep in mind, Paul wrote these words while surviving in one of the most deplorable places he had ever been imprisoned. In spite of that, Paul praised God for his past rescues without taking any personal credit. The fact God rescued him gave Paul the humble confidence he needed for his present circumstances or future challenges. Paul’s testimony of how the Lord rescued him was a powerful lesson for his discouraged friend. Paul was conveying that God is able to free us from what may appear to be the darkest times in our lives. Just as a healthy relationship is required for effective mentoring, the Christ follower’s relationship with God is the ultimate mentoring relationship. The student must be connected to his or her mentor, but the most critical connection for all Christians is their connection to God the Father through Jesus Christ. Paul could share examples of his faith in God for rescue, but Timothy had to gain those experiences based upon his own circumstances and faith in God for deliverance. The best way for Timothy to teach that principle to his students would be from his personal experience, not just from the experiences of Paul.

**Verse 12.** In fact, **all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.** After his words of praise concerning God’s consistent help in his times of need, Paul shared a stark reality with Timothy. Paul shifted the focus from his trials and tribulations to those of other believers in Christ Jesus. Timothy was well aware of Paul’s persecutions; Paul reminded Timothy that as he continued to follow the advice from his mentor, he would also face similar persecutions. Paul was not just speaking as one with personal experience, he sounded like a prophet. Keep in mind Paul did not say that all Christians would be persecuted. He said that all who *want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus* will be persecuted. There is

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**SUMMARIZE:** Refer to **Bible Commentary** to provide explanation about the actions that would benefit Timothy and others who would follow Paul’s teaching.

**SAY:** “The Bible teaches that those who live a godly life should expect to experience persecution.”

**READ:** Enlist someone to read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, a description of the suffering and persecution Paul experienced.
Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to Bible Commentary 4 on page 83 and this page for more information about persecution from these verses:

- God rescued him (v. 11b).
- Those who live a godly life will be persecuted (v. 12).
- Evil people and imposters will become worse (v. 13).

DISCUSS: Question 4 (PSG, p. 86): When have you seen difficult seasons of life create opportunities to encourage others?

Alternate: Why is it important to share both the ups and downs of life with those you mentor?

TRANSITION: “Next we will see the important role the Word of God plays in the lives of believers.”

STUDY THE BIBLE
2 Timothy 3:14-17

READ: Ask a group member to read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

a subtle but significant difference. Not all Christians live godly lives—perhaps they are trying to avoid persecution. Paul’s warning makes it clear that all believers living godly lives will need God’s deliverance. They will receive it, whether in this life or the next.

Verse 13. In this verse, Paul’s warnings of persecution continued to become more personal and intense. Paul stated that evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. Timothy likely knew some of the very people who wanted to harm him, the church, and the kingdom of God. The battles Timothy had to fight could become more discouraging as he became increasingly in the minority. Physical threats might come, and many times are more easily fought, but emotional and mental stress from personal attacks are many times more difficult to survive. Hard as it might be, Timothy was to teach and live the truth he taught to show the contrast between a true follower of Christ Jesus and the evil people and impostors.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you,

15 and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Verses 14-15. The primary focus of all Christian mentoring relationships must be the Word of God. If the Word of God is not the center-piece of this bond, there is no eternal truth, there is no power, and there is no
wisdom. All participants must have as their foundation the Word of God. Paul began this section by reminding Timothy of his roots in God's Word. As Timothy dealt with daily challenges and prepared for future problems, he first had to remember to continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. Paul's relationship with Timothy gave him knowledge of Timothy's spiritual formation. Please note the repetition of the word you in these verses. The Word of God had been poured into Timothy's life and was the primary ingredient that established Timothy's core beliefs and ultimately led to his salvation. Paul was communicating confidence in Timothy's ability to overcome the persecutions he would encounter by advising him to depend on what he knew about God through his current practices and training he received as a child. There was no learning curve for Timothy; he already had personal experience with the power of the Word of God, and it was the bedrock of his faith. For the present-day believer, these verses demonstrate the critical need for Christ followers to immerse themselves in the Word of God to be prepared to face the challenges of godly living.

Verse 16. Paul concluded his teaching in this section by transitioning from what the Word of God meant to Timothy and his spiritual formation to his famous big-picture description of the Word of God. Paul's words should have even greater meaning knowing the context of this passage. Most students of the Word of God read these verses independently of the context that begins with verse 10. When Timothy became a preacher, he began pouring the Word of God into the lives of God's people. Paul reminded him that the Word of God deserved to be Timothy's primary weapon in the theological and spiritual battles he would be fighting in the deeply pagan society in which he ministered. The Word would also be his trusted companion as he traveled and faced even more serious challenges.

Paul began his inspired words by saying that all Scripture is inspired by God. It would be easy for readers to assign credit solely to Paul for these words. Paul may have put these words on paper, but they are God's inspired words. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the inspired message was communicated to the writer. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the words that flowed through the tip of the writing instrument maintain their integrity. This is a fundamental lesson of theology. Christ followers must believe that all Scripture is inspired. ▪
Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

Without inspiration these words are merely Paul's word and have no power. With inspiration, Paul's words are profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness. Paul shared four functions of the Word of God. The Scripture must be taught: Scripture must be the source of all teaching. Scripture must also be used to rebuke—to boldly challenge the non-biblical behavior and doctrine of believers and non-believers alike. The goal of this challenge is conformity to God's teaching rather than to societal norms. Then next function of the Word of God is correction. Correction relates to restoring a person's behavior or doctrine back to the biblical standard once followed by that individual. The last function of Scripture is for training in righteousness. This phrase should remind the reader of Paul's inspired words in verse 12 about wanting to live a godly life in Christ Jesus. This final function is best described in verse 17.

Verse 17. The process of using Scripture in the manner described in verse 16 is a significant challenge because that process works contrary to our default behavior as sinners. Sinners do not want rules nor consequences of their behavior. As Paul concluded this passage, he offered Timothy hope that the use of Scripture in this manner would ultimately pay wonderful dividends. The promise is that the man of God may be complete. Scripture, with the Spirit's interpretation and empowerment, will completely prepare the follower of God to face challenges with the wisdom and power needed to be victorious. Not only will the Christ follower be completely prepared for challenges, he or she will also be equipped for every good work. The difficult work of service to the Lord is good. Timothy's opponents would not be able to stop God's intended result. God declared it good. The encouragement Timothy received from these words must have eased his anguish. These words can have the same impact today.

SUMMARIZE: Refer to Bible Commentary 6 to reinforce teaching about the functions of the Word and how it enables spiritual maturity and equips believers for service.

DISCUSS: Question 5 (PSG, p. 88): When has someone shared God's Word with you in a way that changed your direction? Alternate: What are some principles and values that are important to pass on to others?

DO: Invite group members to complete the activity “Mentors” on PSG page 88. Share responses, but be sensitive to those who desire to maintain their privacy.
LIVE IT OUT

How will you help someone else grow in Christ? Consider the following options:

- **Pray.** Ask God for someone who might help and mentor you in the faith. Keep your eyes open for a potential mentor.

- **Invite.** Invite someone to share a meal with you. Share your testimony, and learn more about the other person. Trust the Lord in whether that meeting will begin a mentoring relationship.

- **Commit.** Make a commitment to meet regularly (at least twice per month) with someone. If you need help in the mentoring process, read *Mentor* by Chuck Lawless (Nashville: LifeWay, 2018).

**LIVE IT OUT GUIDE:** Emphasize The Point: Someone helped you grow in Christ; do the same for someone else.

**REVIEW:** Review *Live It Out* (PSG, p. 89); (see text to the left). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

**WRAP IT UP**

**GUIDE:** Remind group members to remember those who provided guidance to them in their Christian walk. If these individuals are still alive, take time to thank them. If not, thank God for their godly influence on your life.

**PRAY:** “Father, thank you for placing people in our lives who have helped us in our walk with You. Point us to people whom we can help in their Christian development.”

**EXTRA!**

Free additional ideas for your group are available at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra
While Paul preached the gospel everywhere he went and planted numerous churches, perhaps his most important contribution was mentoring men such as Timothy and Titus. Having trained these men, Paul trusted them to deal effectively with sticky ministry challenges, whether confronting, and if needed removing, sinning elders (Timothy’s assignment) or appointing qualified leaders (Titus’s task).
Paul’s Personal Background

Paul grew up in the bustling city of Tarsus. He studied under the well-known Rabbi Gamaliel I and zealously persecuted the early Christians. An encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus caused a radical change in Paul’s outlook: one moment, he viewed Jesus as a messianic pretender cursed by God, the next he believed Jesus was Messiah and Lord. The church’s most committed nemesis had become its most fervent propagator.


Mentor to Timothy

Timothy was in Ephesus, the third-largest city in the Roman Empire, smaller only than Rome and Alexandria and boasting a population of 200,000-250,000. In his first letter, Paul delineated Timothy’s assignment: he was to “command certain people not to teach false doctrines” (1 Tim. 1:3, NIV).

At the outset, Paul referred to Timothy as his “true son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). Earlier, he had said of Timothy, “I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests” (Phil. 2:20, CSB). The expression “true son” could, but need not necessarily, imply that Paul led Timothy to faith in Christ. Most likely, “true son in the faith” meant Timothy genuinely reproduced Paul’s own spiritual characteristics, as a biological son would reflect his father’s natural characteristics.

Paul’s first letter to Timothy was written about fifteen years after their initial encounter. Since Timothy was likely a young man in his mid- or early twenties—Timothy’s designation “disciple” implies independent adulthood—when he first met the apostle. Timothy would have been in his late thirties or early forties at the time of writing, hence the reference to Timothy’s “youth” (1 Tim. 4:12); the apostle Paul would have been in his early sixties. The respective terms “apostle . . . son” therefore indicate both the different degrees of authority and the affectionate relationship between these two men of God. As his life and ministry began to wind down, Paul endeavored to preserve his legacy through his adoptive son in the faith. The phrase “true son” thus designates Timothy as Paul’s rightful successor.

When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, a few years had passed since the first epistle. The visit Paul envisaged (1 Tim. 3:14-15; 4:13) may or may not have taken place as the apostle’s plans were known to change. At the time of the second letter, Timothy was still on assignment in Ephesus; Paul was no longer in Macedonia (1:3) but once again in prison, most likely in Rome (2 Tim. 1:8). Unlike his first imprisonment, where he stayed in his own rented house and received all who came to see him (Acts 28:30), Paul was...

Inside one of the hillside houses in Ephesus. Located behind the shops on the north side of Curetes Street was a wealthy residential area referred to as the terrace houses. Each house contained several rooms; many homes were multi-storied and had mosaic decorations inside.
now suffering “to the point of being bound like a criminal” (2 Tim. 2:9, CSB) and was “being poured out as a drink offering” (4:6, CSB), meaning his death was imminent.

Paul’s second letter to Timothy is much more personal in nature than the first. Paul was in a reminiscent mood (1:3-6), and the epistle assumed the character of a last testament in which Paul appealed to Timothy to “Preach the word … in season and out of season” (4:2, CSB) as he passed on the mantle of leadership to him. Timothy’s role was particularly vital as many of Paul’s associates had abandoned him by the time he wrote this second and final letter to Timothy (4:10-11,16).

**Mentor to Titus**

While not as close to Paul as Timothy, Titus, too, was a trusted coworker. When Paul went to confer with the leaders of the Jerusalem church concerning the gospel he preached, he took Titus with him (Gal. 2:13). While Acts does not mention Titus, his name surfaces repeatedly in Second Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5-6,13; 8:6,16,23; 12:18; written in the mid-50s AD) and twice in Galatians (Gal. 2:1,3; written ca. AD 49; Acts covers to AD 62).

Titus’s assignment found him on the island of Crete, where he was to take care of unfinished business, appointing elders in every city (Titus 1:5). About twenty cities are attested in Titus’ day, the most prominent of which were Gortyn, the administrative capital—and Knossos, a Roman colony Augustus likely established and that was famous for its Bronze-Age palace. In Titus’s day, people on Crete worshiped in cults venerating Augustus, Roma, the deified Emperor Claudius, Asclepius (a god of healing), and the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis. Crete, an island of 3,219 square miles, is mountainous. Travel was often difficult, especially since Crete lacked a system of Roman roads. Thus Titus’s task was challenging both logistically and spiritually; evangelizing the entire island was an ambitious undertaking.
As in his first letter to Timothy, Paul designed his epistle to Titus to encourage his apostolic delegate to complete his assignment and to stand firm against his opponents. By that time, Paul had known and been associated with Titus in ministry for close to two decades, and Titus had proven himself as a coworker who could be entrusted with delicate and difficult tasks. In the present case, Titus’s challenge came from the magnitude of the task, the false teachers’ opposition, and the widespread and rampant immorality of the Cretan culture.8

While Paul’s ministry was about to come to an end, his influence was to continue through the work of his trusted associates whom he had strategically trained over decades of faithful ministry and who were poised to take the baton their mentor was about to pass to them. As far as Paul was concerned, he could confidently say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8, NIV).

6. Ibid., 227.
7. Ibid., 221.
Every Sunday guests are among us. This past Sunday, I was introduced to a mother-daughter duo visiting our church campus for worship and Bible study. Here are a few things we did right with these guests:
1. We escorted rather than pointed.—The pastor’s wife escorted the daughter to her Bible study group. I took the mother and did the same for her. This is far preferable to simply pointing and telling the guest, “Your group is down the hall and around the corner.” There’s a chance the guest could get lost or even wind up in the wrong classroom. It also gave me time to talk with the lady as we walked to class.

2. We introduced the guests to people in the group.—When I dropped off the mother with her Bible study group, I introduced her to the leader and at least one other group member. You always want people in the group to interact with guests as soon as possible, and personal introductions make that happen. The other alternative is to simply deliver them and hope for the best—and that’s a bad plan! I’ve actually had that happen to me, and it’s a poor way to connect guests to groups.

3. We sat with the guest in worship.—My wife was in the Bible study group with the mother, so she volunteered to sit with the guest during worship. This gave my wife some time to connect further with the woman and her daughter. They were able to continue building bridges both before and after the worship service. Again, this is preferable to just letting guests attend worship and fend for themselves.

To learn more about becoming a welcoming church, pick up a copy of Dr. Thom Rainer’s book *Becoming a Welcoming Church.*

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When I enlist leaders for new groups, I look for one key trait: a teachable spirit.

The value of any teacher—whether he has never led a Bible study group or has been leading groups for fifty years—is his desire to learn—and keeping learning. Unfortunately, too many leaders assume they know exactly how to lead a group, and that assumption typically is based on how someone once led them. Too often, however, poor teaching skills are simply passed down through the years.
But even for those who do know how to facilitate a group, it’s wise to keep learning. The message of Scripture never changes, but methodologies change. Different generations process knowledge and interact with one another in different ways. Culture has an impact on the teaching-learning process, so we find great value in continually looking for ways to improve. And if our desire is to honor Christ through our group, wouldn’t that include a desire to give Him our very best?

Let me suggest three ways you can invest in your group members and become a better leader.

1. **Self study.** Simply pick up a book and read it! Many books are available on creative teaching, facilitating a group, and leading effective Bible study groups. My favorite books for leading Bible study come from Davis Francis (www.lifeway.com/DavidFrancis). Each book is short, yet intensely practical. Although short (48 pages), each book is not one to breeze through. Read a chapter, mull it over, and consider ways to apply it to your leadership.

2. **Group planning.** If your group is a part of a planned, strategic discipleship strategy in your church (and I sincerely hope it is), consider getting with other group leaders to plan. When leaders are using the same curriculum, they can come together and share ideas. Some churches do this weekly; some do it monthly. I can immediately call to mind specific stories of how my group study was enriched because of planning beforehand with others. On some occasions, I walked into the planning meeting with a solid plan in place, but as we discussed ideas for leading, I left with an even stronger plan. Other times, I was struggling with how I would approach a certain issue or part of my plan. As I shared my concern and we discussed it, I left the meeting with a great solution.

   Busy schedules can make it hard to find time to meet, but it’s worth it. Some churches do this weekly; some do it monthly. Some do this online via Skype or Zoom. But my favorite approach remains a face-to-face weekly meeting. In one context, we taught our groups on Sunday morning and met as a group of leaders in the late afternoon. The morning’s study was still fresh in our minds, and we could evaluate and consider what we would do differently if we were leading that particular study again. (Evaluation is a great tool for continual improvement.) Then, after discussing the session we’d lead the next Sunday, we had all week to think about the sessions. During the week, I would see events in the news or read an article that I realized would provide great discussion fodder for the Bible study.

   Another way to plan with others in your church: grab one of the David Francis books I mentioned. If everybody reads a chapter, you can discuss together the principles from the chapter. The website for these books offers plans to help facilitate the group discussion.

3. **Conferences.** Check with your leadership for Bible study training occurring in your area. Some denominations (Southern Baptists, for example) offer training events on a state and local level. These conferences are led by experienced practitioners and offer great tips for working with different age groups, developing a creative study, facilitating a discussion, and on and on. One benefit I particularly enjoy is interacting with leaders from different churches. We learn from each other.

   Leading your group has kingdom impact. It is significant! That reason alone should motivate you to do all you can to continually hone your skills as a group leader. Take advantage of the opportunities before you.

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