

The Encouragement Newsletter

2nd Quarter - 2011

The Mentoring Experience- Pt. 2

In the last newsletter, The Mentoring Experience—Pt. 1, I provided a foundation for my thoughts on mentoring. I believe it is a very essential part of life and necessary for learning and development. A good mentor can help you get to the next level faster and with fewer bumps and bruises. Also, a good mentor can provide the wisdom to get to a destination safely and with sanity.

As I stated in the last newsletter, I was blessed to be raised in a home with both parents, but it was my mother who provided the discipline of Christ from childhood. She taught me about prayer, reading the Bible, faithfulness and commitment to God and His house. She taught me all of the foundational things that would make me stable in Christ. So, my mother was my first spiritual and natural mentor. However, because I am this unique complex “work in progress” and I have a heavenly Father that is mindful of my purpose, who I am and what I need to bring balance to my life, He saw fit to place someone in my life to add to what my mother had already imparted. That someone is a my dear mentor and friend, Verna Broady.

About 25 years ago, our hearts were knitted together. She has been very instrumental in keeping me on “the straight and narrow” and putting disciplines in me that helped make me the woman I am today.

How It All Began

I joined the Church where Verna was the choir director and I became the musician. We formed a relationship in ministry, but deeper was our friendship. While working together, we lived and breathed the ministry. We always worked together as a team in order to improve what the Lord had given us to steward in His house—A small music ministry that the Lord blessed. It was the best 12 years of ministry I have experienced thus far.

I was content to keep the relationship as it was; however, after the birth of my second son, the Lord had something else in mind. One day while at work, He spoke to me and said, “You are her Timothy and she is your Paul”. In reading about the life of Timothy with Paul, I knew there was something more to the plan of God than music ministry. We were already sharing countless hours in the word of God and discussing the many books we were reading. It is like we had our own book club. Our common bond was Jesus and the word of God. I enjoyed this, but it was time to go deeper. Having been hurt in a mentoring “type” of relationship before, I did not desire another relationship of this kind. With this hurt, I built the walls of Jericho to protect my heart and it took Divine intervention to break them down. My heart had become

hardened to mentoring and close relationships because of the hurt I had experienced, but the Lord Jesus died for all of our hurt and pain. I had to learn to let it go in order to benefit from this new thing God was doing.

I knew my Father spoke to me and I wanted to obey. So, I submitted in my heart to what He spoke, then I called and told her what the Lord said to me. She just laughed. To this day, I am not sure why she laughed. Perhaps she was not clueless, but fully aware she was already mentoring me and waiting on me to open my heart to the Lord’s will. Now, I was hesitant because of my hurt, but I was also hesitant because I knew things would change. Whenever we get into a direct mentoring relationship, we are saying, “I submit myself to you”. In a friendship, you may take the advice of a friend, but mentally, it is not considered “submitting”. Yes, things changed, but it did not strain our relationship because we both knew the Lord had knitted our hearts and He was the author of the relationship not man.

Mentoring is the act of providing counsel; guidance. The act of receiving teaching and counsel.

*Opposition,
Testing,
Wars
Within &
Wars
Without*

There was opposition from the day our friendship began. What I have learned in life is this, there will always be people that believe they have the plan for your life. They look at your gifts, talents, personality and character and create a plan for you. They may even assume upon themselves the role of counselor and advisor. Or, make subtle statements that may possibly detach you from purpose.

One of the subtle statements told to me was, “I would be under control”. Meaning, I would lose my identity. The total opposite has occurred. I have maintained my individuality...and brain. I was free to be me. I was not molded into a clone. At times, I was strongly admonished, but never forced. I was allowed to freely receive advice and/or counsel.

Another reason why some may have opposed the relationship was because of our totally opposite backgrounds. Verna was what I call “out there”. She did things that I was too afraid to even think about. I was what some call a “good church girl”. She had a life of drugs and served time in prison. This was her life “pre-salvation” and I met her “post-salvation”. If you ever hear

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her awesome testimony and see her life, you will know that when she decided to follow Jesus, she made a **REAL** genuine commitment to follow Him no matter what. Truly, The Lord knew all of this, but was more concerned with His purpose and plan regardless of our backgrounds.

In time, I also realized that some opposition I experienced was because of negative personal bias. I had to resolve within myself, “that is their opinion” and I could not allow their opinion or experience (real or imagined) influence me.

Fruitfulness is the result of a healthy mentoring relationship.

I can not say that people were purposely trying to pull me from God’s purpose in this relationship. For the most part, I believe they were concerned and well meaning. However, what I was experiencing opposed His plan. Scripture says, in Jeremiah 29:11, “I know the plans I have for you...”. Isaiah 55:8 tells us, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord”. Plus, He chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. (1 Corinthians 1:27). The way the Lord develops

us to fulfill His plans are, more likely than not, totally opposite of what others may think.

As with all relationships, there will be times of testing. Testing is necessary to determine the stability of the relationship and make it stronger. No matter what happened or happens, we have maintained the bond the Lord gave us. Too many times, people walk out on their relationships because of misunderstandings, offenses, hurts and disappointments. Walking away can cause the relationship to be irreparable. It is so much better to reconcile— especially, when the Lord has told you that you are to be connected to that person. When offended, hurt or disappointed, often the attitude is, “I’ll be able to make it” or “I don’t need him/her”. I heard Bill Johnson, Pastor of Bethel Church, say this very true statement “Some things you will only get in the context of relationships”. Why? Because relationships help us develop, grow and mature.

As the relationship progressed, I discovered many bad attitudes and dispositions I did not know was in me until they surfaced. I fully realize that some things we will never know is within us until the fire causes heat and then it jumps out. (See Acts 28:3) I said that I was this massive work in progress. I needed someone to step into my darkness, bring the light of Jesus and with patience walk with me through many issues. One day, I was talking over an issue with Verna and many things she said stuck with me. Specifically, what resonated with me was her attitude, the focus of her assignment from God to me and the will to remain in covenant.

This experience has really had some rocky roads. Had I listened and succumb to the tests, opposition and wars within and without I really do not know where I would be today. I wanted to run away so many times because of the pressure, but I would always hear God’s voice saying, “I have not told you to go anywhere”. I was determined and maintained my obedience to the Father.

I am almost finished with this section, but it is so important to be assured that you have heard from the Lord when building a mentoring relationship or any relationship. This enables you to stand when others doubt your Divine connections, you experience opposition and begin to waiver. Only when you stand, will you experience the blessings of endurance.

Finally, to make sure I am clear about what I have written here, I want to say, I am not saying you should not listen to others who may provide good counsel, advice or information about the one you may be considering for a mentoring relationship or friendship, because in the multitude of counselors there is definitely safety. (Proverbs 11:14) I am saying, though, that we should honor and respect the counsel of others, but their words should not influence us to walk in the will of man, rather than the will of God. So, prayerfully consider the counsel, but obey God.

Growth, Maturity & Character Development

I did not know how much mentoring would benefit me when I submitted to the will of God. It has made a tremendous impact on my life. I am an advocate for healthy relationships. If a relationship is unhealthy, it is a liability - not an asset. To remain in liability relationships is to waste years going no where, which is why we must carefully consider those we allow to influence our life.

As stated, initially, I experienced indirect mentoring before direct mentoring. In the beginning, we were always spending time planning the ministry, but when I began receiving direct mentoring, the times together shifted and became more personal. Question like, “Why did you respond like that?” and “What are you thinking?” were part of our conversations. These questions made me think about my ways. I could not just give any kind of answer just to get out of facing “me”. I was being provoked to change by putting off the old man. (See Colossians 3:1-17) If you have ever seriously faced yourself, you know it is not always easy. Verna’s ability to be frank, open and honest kept the relationship “real”. *There was NO sugar coating.* Her openness to share her life have been a strength to me. I watched her walk through challenges. Her resilience to continue when others would have given up spoke and continues to speak volumes. I have witnessed a life that demonstrates a passionate pursuit of Christ no matter the cost. All of this has been instrumental in my ability to face myself—the good, the bad and the ugly—as I pursue Christ and continue growing in His grace and knowledge.

What helped me grow and mature have been the years of countless hours of instruction, discipline and counsel. Many times, like a child, I was lovingly and respectfully put in my place. I thought I knew what I was doing, but did not. We all can tell a well mannered child because of their behavior. This same principle applies to the mentoring experience. It will cause you to be well mannered and behave differently. The times I received correction was essential for my life and character development. I have steered clear of so many mistakes and headaches because I was instructed to behave in a more excellent way. There were so many times when I wanted to handle situations in the “In Your Face” manner and pointedly say some things. Trust me, I did not want to walk in the more excellent way. I wanted to pull out the “I’m grown!” card and just go my own way. However, after discussing the situations and heeding wisdom, I avoided putting my foot in my mouth...and swallowing it. A lot of times, even as an adult seeking counsel, we are told, “Don’t do that” or “Do That”, without discussion or explanation. However, explanation and discussion brings so much clarity. The Word of God was always the guide for her instruction and counsel along with a lot of

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encouragement, tears and times of prayer. This produced growth, maturity and the development of God's character inside of me.

Some mentoring relationships will last for a short season and some will last a life time.

As I look back over this experience, one thing I know, if I did not continue to maintain this mentoring relationship and obey the Lord, I do not believe I would have been able to make it through the valleys and dark places I have experienced. Maintaining this relationship has been an anchor and has caused me to triumph in many ways. Again, we all need someone who has been where we are trying to go and help us get there. I am not elevating a person above God. No not at all. We are able to make it to the next place because someone blazes the trail, allow us to stand on their shoulders and simply hold our hand as we journey through life and tell us, "You will be alright", when life is seems to be crumbling right before your eyes.

Think You Need a Mentor?

I do not have an exhaustive "How To" list, but I have some things to consider. Here they are -

- Are you ready to submit to someone? This is a big part of mentoring.
- Ask yourself - "Where am I going?", "Why do I want to be mentored?" and "Why this person?". Remember, you do not want to waste your time, nor theirs.
- Where is this person going? Are they focused? Are they stable? Remember, whatever they are, you just may become through automatic impartation.
- If the one you are considering has mentored others, what character do you see in them. Maturity? Fruitfulness? *Note: Lack of maturity is not necessarily due to bad mentoring.*
- Observe their spiritual walk. Do they have a real passion for Jesus?
- How does this person treat others? Are they respectful? (*Inside and outside of the church*) For example, if you go out to eat, observe how do they treat the waiter/waitress.
- Do not rush into a direct mentoring relationship quickly. Get to know the person in an indirect way. Remember, we served in ministry as a team before I submitted to a direct mentoring relationship.
- Pray and then obey.
- The mentor you are considering will have to prayerfully consider mentoring you because it takes a lot of time, patience and self-sacrifice to be a good mentor.
- Once in a mentoring relationship, don't use, abuse or play games. Be open to change and willing to share your resources—time, money and talents. Sharing is one way to show your thankfulness.

Jesus Christ is the Author & Finisher of My Faith
 Veronica B. McCray, Co-Author
 Fred McCray, Sr.- Editor

Where Am I In My Experience?

Today, the Lord has allowed Verna and I to continue sharing a mentoring relationship and friendship, although she is no longer the music director with me serving as the musician. We both have tight schedules, but we still meet up for some real genuine Koinonia (fellowship). It is always refreshing. We may start off conversing as friends, picking up where we left off, but because she is mindful of her assignment, right in the middle of the conversation, she will put on the mentor hat to provide counsel, direction, correction and encouragement.

Verna's passionate pursuit of Christ led her to follow a vision and dream she had well over 10 years ago. She is the Founder and Apostle of the Apostolic Training Center (ATC). The purpose of ATC is to equip and train God's people for the work of the ministry, as stated in Ephesians 4:11-12. She is making disciples for Christ and has begotten many sons and daughters since the inception of this work. I have had the pleasure of serving in many ways as she established the new ministry. Watching her walk through the challenges, triumphs, ups and downs of pioneering a work has been another part of my mentoring experience. It has given me the "Can Do" and "Will Do" spirit necessary to walk in God's will.

Therefore, go into all of the world and make disciples, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

Conclusion

I really could write so much more, but must conclude by saying, the benefits of the mentor is building the Kingdom of God, seeing the fruit of your labor in the life of an individual and then reaping what you have sown. Isn't this what Jesus did? He spent three years mentoring His disciples, who carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations of the world, and now He sees you and I. There are so many in need of positive mentoring influence (indirectly and directly). Let us go into our world and do what Jesus did and what He told his disciples to do— **Go, Make Disciples.**



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If this newsletter has been an Encouragement to you, please let me know by e-mailing me at - **The_EPlace@yahoo.com**. I would love to hear from you. Also, this newsletter along with other writings are available at **TheEncouragementPlace.com**.