

## Be Like Me

A practical introduction to discipleship, especially for disciplers of younger men.

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# Introduction

These thoughts are intended to provide a practical introduction to discipleship generally and the discipleship of younger men specifically. I expect you “also have the Spirit” and will use your judgment as you read and serve.

Reading about discipling is not an effective method for becoming a disciple-maker. You become a disciple-maker by discipling, and you become a better discipler by discipling more. My hope is that this material will answer some basic practical questions, provide a framework to guide your thinking about your discipleship relationships, and prepare you to effectively address common issues that arise when discipling others, especially younger men.

# Discipleship Generally

## Terminology

Go therefore and make disciples.<sup>1</sup>

Some call the process “discipleship”. Others call it “mentoring”. Some prefer to retain the terms “discipleship” and “disciple making” for their missional connotations – the process of leading someone to “confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in their hearts that God has raised Him from the dead.”<sup>2</sup> They therefore prefer to use the term “mentoring” to refer to the process of building up of confessing Christians “to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”<sup>3</sup> I understand the historical context of discipleship/mentoring to flow out the Jewish practice of discipleship. And I understand Jesus’ command to “make disciples” to include the work that follows saving faith.

## Historical Context

There are several examples of discipling in Scripture. Every healthy follower of Christ should have some one or three people above them (discipling them), some one or three people beside them (walking with them), and some one or several people below them (whom they are discipling). Paul was disciplined by Gamaliel<sup>4</sup> and then by Christ Himself,<sup>5</sup> he had men like Peter beside him,<sup>6</sup> and men like Timothy and Titus below him. Moses had Jethro above him,<sup>7</sup> Aaron beside him,<sup>8</sup> and Joshua below him.<sup>9</sup>

By the time Jesus was walking on the Earth, a tradition of discipleship had been established within Judaism.

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 28:19

<sup>2</sup>Romans 10:9-10

<sup>3</sup>Ephesians 4:13

<sup>4</sup>Acts 22:3

<sup>5</sup>Galatians 1:12

<sup>6</sup>Galatians 2:9, 11ff

<sup>7</sup>Exodus 18:5ff, esp. v. 8, 16, 19

<sup>8</sup>Exodus 4:14ff

<sup>9</sup>Numbers 11:28, Exodus 33:11, Exodus 17:9ff, Deuteronomy 31:23

As I understand it<sup>10</sup>, around the time of Christ, there were a handful of men at any one time who were called “Rabbi” (teacher). This title was conferred upon a man when at least three other rabbis had examined him and agreed together to grant him the title. Along with the title came the authority to offer new understandings of the Law. A rabbi’s understanding of the Law was called their “yoke”.<sup>11</sup>

Jewish children would study the Torah, indeed memorize it. At a young age, they would be tested and those who excelled would continue in their study/memorization of the rest of what we know as the Old Testament. They would again be tested around the age of 12. If they excelled, they would go out and find a rabbi to follow. Having picked a rabbi, they would follow the rabbi for a while, learning from him, and then ask that rabbi to let them become his disciples. The rabbi would then interrogate them. If the rabbi found them wanting, he would send them away, “Go and be a fisherman.” If the rabbi found them worthy, then they would become his disciples.<sup>12</sup>

As disciples, they would follow their rabbi everywhere, learn everything from him, and would do so for years. How does my rabbi talk to women? How does my rabbi dress in the morning? How does my rabbi understand the soteriological implications of the sacrifice of Isaac? Their rabbi would have many public responsibilities – he served as an itinerant preacher and judge – and his disciples would sit under him as he preached to “the crowds”. But his disciples would also be given special instruction, private talks as they walked along the road.<sup>13</sup>

The goal of discipleship is for the disciple to become like their rabbi.<sup>14</sup> To look like him, to sound like him, to walk with God like him, to know God as he knows God, and then ultimately to become a rabbi like him and train up disciples of their own.

When Christ calls us to be His disciples He is calling us to a lifetime of following Him, learning from Him, becoming like Him. And serving others as they do the same.

## Whose Disciples

Jesus is our rabbi and we are following Him as His disciples, yet we are called to make disciples. The disciples that we make are in some sense both our disciples and Christ’s.

Join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Most of the following discussion comes from Ray Vander Laan - who can apparently be found now at followtherabbi.com

<sup>11</sup>hence Matthew 11:29

<sup>12</sup>Note the significant differences between this typical practice and Jesus’ calling of His disciples.

<sup>13</sup>see, for example, Matthew 13:10-11.

<sup>14</sup>Luke 6:40

<sup>15</sup>Philippians 3:17

The things which you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things.<sup>16</sup>

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord ... so that you became an example to all believers.<sup>17</sup>

I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.<sup>18</sup>

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

But [be] imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.<sup>20</sup>

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.<sup>21</sup>

But do not be called 'Rabbi', for One is your Teacher and you are all brothers.<sup>22</sup>

To the extent that you are living a life worthy of imitation and are calling others to imitate you as you imitate Christ, you have disciples. But Jesus is the only Rabbi. As with much of Judaism, Jesus both adopts, practices and commands the tradition of disciple-making, and yet also fulfills the tradition in such a way that He is the center and source of the Christian expression of what was originally a Jewish practice.

Importance of the independence of the discipler. Define discipler and disciple. The discipler needs to walk with Jesus and others, but they are the ones walking with their disciples, not some overseer or even parent. They should be free to handle things as they think best, allowed to mess up. Walking with a discipler is helping them fix their own thinking, not getting into the middle of the discipleship relationship.

Rabbinical Authority: granted by God and community - to tell what is right and wrong, to judge the Law.

Discipler authority. Granted by disciple - to be heard and seen.

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<sup>16</sup>Philippians 4:9

<sup>17</sup>1 Thessalonians 1:6-7

<sup>18</sup>1 Corinthians 4:15-17

<sup>19</sup>1 Corinthians 11:1

<sup>20</sup>Hebrews 6:12

<sup>21</sup>Hebrews 13:7

<sup>22</sup>Matthew 23:8

## Imitation

The core method in the Jewish practice of discipleship is imitation. Scripture makes it clear that imitation remains a crucial part of Christian discipleship<sup>23</sup>.

Discipling others requires that you live worthy of imitation. You are calling your guys to follow you as you follow Christ. You need to fill your life with the disciplines that will keep you close to Christ, that stir up your affections for Christ, that enable you to encounter Christ and be transformed into His image. You need men above you, watching over you, encouraging these disciplines in you.

Your guys must be allowed to see your life. They need to see you live, see you struggle, doubt, sin, repent. They need to see you live with your wife. How do you tell her that you love her? Do you argue? How do you deal with that? They need to see you with your kids. How do you think about disciplining them? Do you enjoy playing with them? What are your hopes and fears for them? They need to see you interact with other men. How do you talk to them? How do you shake hands? How do you joke with them? They need to see you relate to women. Do you hold the door? Do you let your eyes linger? Do you go out of your way to help a woman change a flat? They need to see you grow with God and fail with God and walk with God.

They will see more than you know without you doing anything intentional. But you must be intentional about sharing your life with them. When the sermon convicts you of a sin you need to deal with, tell your guys about it. What did that conviction feel like? How did you know it was from God? How did you repent? What will be different? How can they pray for you? Who above/beside you did you talk about it with and how are they holding you accountable? Tell them about what you are reading in your time with God, and what He is teaching you. Tell them stories about when you were younger. Tell them about when you messed up and what happened. Tell them how God has been faithful. Tell them when God feels far away and what you are doing in response. Tell them when He is close and what He is doing in your life.

personal, not curriculum.

Jesus teaches – taught of God, No man shall tell his neighbor.

Do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Master, even Christ. Imitation is the core method of discipleship. The disciple's becoming like their Rabbi is the core purpose of discipleship. Jesus is the Rabbi. The disciple imitates the discipler who imitates Jesus. The disciple grows into the maturity of Christ-likeness. Calling a disciple to growing imitation requires growing transparency on the part of the discipler – you must be able to see that which you are asked to become like.

Jesus' command to "make disciples" encompasses more than, is broader than, the methods and purposes of

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<sup>23</sup>see the many passages above where Paul invokes the language of "imitation".



Christian discipleship. We make disciples by using our personal gifts from the Spirit to serve and grow the Church in the ways we have been individually assigned by Jesus.

Christian discipleship is an evolution of the Jewish tradition of Rabbinical education in the light of Jesus' work, power and authority. A mature Christian disciples younger Christians by walking with them while they both walk with Jesus. The discipler invites the disciple to see and share in their life, and calls the disciple to imitate him as he imitates Christ. The discipler teaches the disciple the disciplines upon which growth toward spiritual maturity is founded, and offers patient, wise counsel as the disciple follows Jesus to an independent faith, which the disciple holds as his own before the God he intimately knows.

Christian discipleship is inherently personal and relational, not a program or a curriculum. Disciplers and disciples are people. They have particular and personal gifts, strengths, weaknesses, histories, brokennesses, scars. They have particular and personal walks with Jesus.

Jewish roots: rabbi and disciples. More than students. Imitation - student becomes like master. Authority to offer new interpretations. Voluntary association of disciples.

## Goals

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.<sup>24</sup>

The purpose of establishing a discipleship relationship is to build up younger men to maturity for their good (that they may live satisfying lives worthy of God), for the good of the Church<sup>25</sup>, and so that they can go out and disciple others. The younger men you serve ought to understand that this is the goal. They should be invited to begin the process of taking on younger men below them when you see they are ready and certainly before you are "finished with them." [EDIT - One of the goals of student ministry is that the saved students would pour into the lost students around them.]

I have called you friends. (John 15:15).

The mentoring relationship is complete when you elevate the younger man you have served from a man below you into whom you are pouring, to a man beside you with whom you walk.

If I'm successful, then they don't need me or rely on me. They have become like me and go off to grow on their own.

We are responsible for working, God causes the growth. We are not responsible for the fruit of our labor. We

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<sup>24</sup>2 Timothy 2:2

<sup>25</sup>Ephesians 4:11ff

are responsible to labor and labor well. This gives freedom. Especially since God is for us. 1 Cor 3. Jeremiah 42:7 - stands before God, delivers words knowing they will be rejecting, promised from the beginning that his ministry will not bear any fruit.

## Prerequisites

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.<sup>26</sup>

You do not need to be specially called to be a mentor. Scripture provides enough guidance to establish mentoring as a general call on the Christian's life.<sup>27</sup> Some might be gifted to mentor or gifted to work with younger men, in which case the presence of the gift signifies a special calling.<sup>28</sup>

If mentoring requires calling a younger man to imitate you as you imitate Christ, then you must be imitating Christ, you must be living a life worthy of imitation.

Part of the Christian life that you model for younger men is a lifetime of discipleship. You need men above you who watch over your soul. You need men beside you who walk with you.

## Therapy

Questions, Therapy (know them and address their personal needs and brokennesses).

Thinking, talking

About themselves, God and life. Being in real relationship. Sharing themselves. Knowing themselves so they are capable of sharing.

Walking with God

ask don't tell, teach to think and walk not repeat. How to talk/think about themselves, God, life in ways that are healthy.

You cannot evaluate the experiences of another – what they saw, heard, felt, what they understood another to be thinking/saying are not yours to validate or invalidate. A person's experiences are part of their

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<sup>26</sup>1 Timothy 3:2-4

<sup>27</sup>Many of the verses noted earlier establish this general call. But I'll note Matthew 28:19-20 as an explicit general call to discipleship and mentoring.

<sup>28</sup>Ephesians 4:11-12. Gifts are given to be used to build up the Church. Also, consider whether you need to be called to mentor a specific younger man, as opposed to being called to mentor generally.

inviolable secret personhood – to be accepted by you as true for them (though not true about the other). Your work in therapy is identifying the truth and lies about identity – who am I, who is God, who is the other – not about experience or activity – what has the other done, how did that make me feel.

All words are weapons. All languaging is manipulation. You can use words to wound others or to bind them. To drive them onto the path you choose. Or you can use them to free and heal. To equip them to make their own choices.

## Magic Words

My words aren't magic. They cannot reach into a younger man's soul and change him. If I had that power, I'd be too terrified I'd do more harm than good to use it. My guys do not need me to fix where they're broken. God's words are powerful, they divide bone and marrow and do not return to Him without accomplishing His good pleasure.<sup>29</sup> God speaks in many ways. Sometimes He speaks to my guys through me. Sometimes He calls me to speak and I refuse out of fear. When He commands that I speak and I refuse, I have to deal with the sin, but God will still speak. He fixes where they are broken.

My primary work with my guys is not speaking words of instruction, though that often comes up and I do. My primary work is not to offer advice on life, though that often comes up and I do. My primary work is to invite, encourage and model walking with God. To play my part in building them up to maturity. To show them God. Empower them to encounter Him through the disciplines. Pray for those encounters to be effective.

You do not always need to “have something” for your guys. There need not always be a point or a lesson when you meet. Just hanging out is valuable and worthwhile. Doing life together is mentoring. There are times when God is working, times when conversations need to happen. However, there are also times when words are just going to get in the way, and you need to sit back and enjoy the time while you wait for God to move.<sup>30</sup>

You cannot tell someone else who they are. You can only walk with them as they discover themselves. There are times when all that should be said is, “That sucks, I'll be praying for you.”

### Theory of Positive Disintegration

Grow beyond our “primary integration” (identity without internal conflict formed by un-examined biological impulses and social conventions) by experiencing disintegration (internal conflict between values). Ultimately leading to a place of re-integration where our values are the product of our own deliberation

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<sup>29</sup>Isaiah 55:11

<sup>30</sup>Exodus 40:36-38

and choices. The best therapist is yourself, and God. Truth changes you, not your effort, not the teaching of others. Hierarchical values (that recognize “higher” virtues) versus self-interested actions justified by conventional values.

“aid in the ongoing task of self-definition. Whether or not the unitary and enduring self is a fiction, it’s hard to go through life without a sense of what distinguishes you as a person: the features that hold you together and track you over time. This isn’t just a matter of your appearance, habits, talents and tastes, but also, as the philosopher Charles Taylor has argued, of commitment to a set of values: a cluster of convictions about the good, the true and the beautiful, and about how to relate to and order each of those things.”

<https://thepointmag.com/2019/examined-life/its-not-you-its-me>

## **Transparency and Privacy**

secrecy/privacy as essential for personhood.

# Spiritual Disciplines

A healthy Christian life is marked by the disciplines that stir up our affections for Christ, give God opportunities to meet with and change us, and empower us to be used by Him to build up His people.

## Prayer

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;  
All day and all night they will never keep silent.  
You who remind the Lord, take no rest for yourselves;  
And give Him no rest until He establishes  
And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.<sup>31</sup>

I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,” declares the Lord God.<sup>32</sup>

Now the Lord saw,  
And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.  
And He saw that there was no man,  
And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;  
Then His own arm brought salvation to Him.<sup>33</sup>

Prayer is the real work of mentoring. Prayer is by the far the biggest commitment I make when I decide to take on another guy. Prayers are magic words. Nothing you can say to your guys directly will have as much power as your prayers for them. Nothing you say directly to your guys will have power if it is not

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<sup>31</sup>Isaiah 62:6-7

<sup>32</sup>Ezekiel 22:30

<sup>33</sup>Isaiah 59:15-16

founded in and shaped by your intercession before God on their behalf. You should spend more time in prayer for them than you spend with them.

You have to pray constantly. Pray specifically for each guy and the things going on in their lives. Pray for what they have asked you to pray for, and pray for what you see they need. Pray with fasting. Pray with and over your guys.

“Lord, teach us to pray.”<sup>34</sup>

Prayer is a discipline that younger men need to be taught.

They need to know why they ought to pray. Prayer is paradoxical. God is omniscient, omnipotent and unchanging. He already knows what I want and need.<sup>35</sup> So what is the point of prayer? In an attempt to resolve this conflict, David Platt has said that in prayer we encounter intimacy with God, express our dependence on God and experience being used by God.<sup>36</sup> Our God is simultaneously the Holy and transcendent I Am, and the immanent and personal Father. Prayer is a living out of the fullness of this complexity. Only the I Am *could* hear or answer, only the Father *would* hear and answer. The I Am created all things from nothing according to an eternal and unchanging plan for His own glory and good. The Father so designed the world that His glory and good is our glory and good, that we are most satisfied when He is most glorified. In prayer, we meet with this God and are changed. In prayer, this God meets with us and works in the world.

Younger men need to be taught what to pray. The Lord’s Prayer establishes a basic model – praise, thanks, intercession, expectation. They should feel invited to pray from where they are. I remember as a kid praying for a magic wand or the ability to fly. One time a guy asked me about praying for a girl friend with “da boobies”. Yes, pray for that if that is where you are. God will change you and as He does your prayers will change. They need to learn how to see the things around them – their fears and challenges, their friends and family, their joys and accomplishments – through the lens of prayer. They need to be taught to pray big prayers, hard prayers, prayers for the impossible and hopeless.<sup>37</sup>

Younger men need to be taught how to pray. How to approach the throne of grace boldly. How to address a holy God. How to lead a group in prayer. How to pray in secret. They need practice turning passing thoughts into continual prayer, turning moments of hurling words at the ceiling into a moment-by-moment entering into the presence of God. They need to be taught how to fast. They need to experience praying with hopeful expectation, waiting on God.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Luke 11:1

<sup>35</sup>Matthew 6:8

<sup>36</sup>He probably said it in a book somewhere as well, but I heard it from him at a Student Life camp a few summers ago.

<sup>37</sup>Ephesians 3:19

<sup>38</sup>Psalms 37:4, 7

## Study

For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.<sup>39</sup>

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.<sup>40</sup>

As with prayer, the purpose of spending time in the Word of God is to meet with Him and be changed by Him. Scripture completes prayer as the primary medium through which God speaks to us. Your guys need to develop the discipline of daily time in the Word and be equipped to make that time effective.

The best way to motivate younger men to spend time with God in regular Bible study is having them spend time with God in regular Bible study – tasting and seeing<sup>41</sup> stirs hunger. You cannot force this, but you can encourage it and model it. Experiment with different ways of getting them to engage in the Text. Memorize a passage together. Go through a book or a topic or a story as part of and over the course of a few meetings. Maybe you just check in with them about their quiet times when you meet, or maybe you text them a reminder every day.

There are several things you can do to equip younger men to study the Word effectively. It is important that they be taught how to approach the Text to hear from God, rather than as an English or history textbook. Giving them an historical context for the stories can help them make sense both of the time line of the narrative and the meaning of particular passages. Provide them with examples of passages that have spoken to moments in your life, and show them how to apply the Text to their lives. Explain and model the many methods for engaging with the Word – going sequentially through a book, topical studies (how do they find relevant passages), meditating on a single passage, pursuing the answer to a particular question, reading large passages to discover the overall structure and themes.

I do not often push books or material beyond the Bible. Most of the guys I've worked with don't want

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<sup>39</sup>1 Corinthians 2:10-13

<sup>40</sup>Hebrews 4:12-13

<sup>41</sup>1 Peter 2:2-3

more to read and I don't want to spend my influence pushing the thoughts of some guy as opposed to the thoughts of God. The exception to this for me has been C.S. Lewis' essay *The Weight of Glory*<sup>42</sup> – which is fantastic and available for free online. Some guys enjoy reading and respond well to books outside of Scripture – digging into a C.S. Lewis or Chesterton or Piper or Merton<sup>43</sup> together can be fruitful. Sometimes you, or they, may find it easier to have conversations about topics, such as sex or pornography or girl friends, if there is a book to guide and inform those discussions. Bryant Jones has used *Every Young Man's Battle*<sup>44</sup> effectively for that purpose.

## Worship

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.<sup>45</sup>

Worship is not just singing. It is part of responding to the God's revelation of Himself to you. Every activity of life, even the most mundane, can be (and ought to be) transformed into praise – can be done so as to lift Him up in our eyes and in the eyes of those around us. Model for your guys how to work in such a way as to bring Him glory. Show them how to praise Him verbally for who He is and what He has done. Encourage them to participate in corporate worship.

## Fellowship

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one *another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.<sup>46</sup>

The Church is not some human invention, it is the body of Christ, the temple of God<sup>47</sup>. Being active participants, not just attendees, in a local church is crucial for the growth of your guys. Model this and talk about it. Teach them what to look for in a church and in a pastor. Especially as they leave for college, help them to find a church and explain how to get more involved than just getting on the attendance sheet.

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<sup>42</sup><http://www.verber.com/mark/xian/weight-of-glory.pdf>

<sup>43</sup>No Man Is An Island, Thomas Merton.

<sup>44</sup>Stephen Arterburn, 2004.

<sup>45</sup>1 Corinthians 10:31

<sup>46</sup>Hebrews 10:24-25

<sup>47</sup>Ephesians 2:19-22



## **Service**

Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.<sup>48</sup>

God meets with us and changes us as we serve others. Model and explain how to serve others as an expression of faith in God as opposed to the faith in man of the misguided secular social justice movement. Give them opportunities to serve others. Teach them how to see the opportunities to serve the people around them. Demonstrate how participating in a local church leads to and is filled with service to others.

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<sup>48</sup>Titus 2:14

# Sin

Sin - identifying, does it lead to death or life, separation or community, does it come from fear or hope, seeking from something else what you should find in God, detachment (using as though didn't use).

## Walking With Sinners

Repentance. Discipline in regularly committing not to sin.

Dealing with recurring sin. Being mastered.

The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you.<sup>49</sup>

Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.<sup>50</sup>

God, thankfully, does not deal with our brokenness all at once. He works gradually. Not just with our sin, but in every area of our lives.

The younger men you serve are sinners, like you. God will deal with their sins as He conforms them into the image of His Son. There are times when you are supposed to be the “voice behind them saying, ‘this is the way, walk in it’”<sup>51</sup>. But there are also times when you should be patient, and quiet and “walk in the way” yourself. Porn is not always the highest priority. Look and listen for where God is working and join Him there. You are not responsible for calling them out every time they make a dirty joke or curse or lust or act disrespectfully. Not calling them out is not the same as condoning their behavior, and they know that.

If you see a pattern of sinful behavior, and have confirmation from the Spirit that it's time to address that behavior, then I suggest starting the conversation by talking about that sin in your own life. Often, sharing

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<sup>49</sup>Deuteronomy 7:22

<sup>50</sup>Matthew 12:45

<sup>51</sup>Isaiah 30:21

your own struggle is enough to prompt them to acknowledge the sin in their own lives; however, sometimes they need more direct engagement.

You cannot convict of sin. You cannot humble them before God. You cannot empower their soul to resist their flesh. You can identify a sin. You can discuss how your sin has brought death into your life and the lives of those around you, and by extension how their sin is as well. You can point them to Christ as the one who not only restores us to God but changes us into saints worthy of God. You can confirm that God's love and acceptance remains on them, that you are not disappointed in them or ashamed of them.

You can offer to hold them accountable. But you cannot force that. And you should make it clear that they are in control. You will back off if they ask you to.

## Rules

Be hesitant to offer solutions or rules for living in order to avoid the sin. Concrete rules for behavioral modification “have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”<sup>52</sup> Rather, encourage them to “set [their] minds on the things above”<sup>53</sup>, to recommit to the spiritual disciplines that tune their souls to God and stir up their affections for Christ. Encountering God changes us, elevates us. Rules make us rule-breakers. Rules fail to acknowledge the power of sin. Rules fail to acknowledge the holiness of God. Rules take our attention off of Christ.

At the same time, repentance requires that we turn from sin and Christ calls us to cut off the hand that sins<sup>54</sup>. Sin (and the rest of our brokenness) flows out of lies that we cling to regarding God, ourselves and others. The work we do to fight sin is not to devise new rules to govern our behavior, but rather to discover and acknowledge the lies we tell ourselves, and replace those lies with Biblical truths. When we dwell on the truth, our understanding of God grows, which grows our love for God, which transforms our souls and empowers obedience. Walk through that process with your guys. Help them identify the lies they believe. Point them to truths in the Word of God. Help them develop the spiritual discipline of dwelling on the Word of God.

## Complexity

Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Colossians 2:23

<sup>53</sup>Colossians 3:2

<sup>54</sup>Matthew 5:29

<sup>55</sup>Hebrews 5:14

Identifying right and wrong requires discernment, sensitivity to the Spirit, experience, and a thorough understanding of both your own identity and the character of God. Not only have our senses of justice and morality been corrupted by the fall, but reality is complex.

Much of Christian culture tends to simplify questions of morality. Perhaps in response to the moral relativism of post-modern thought, Christian ethicists tend to present a morality of hard lines between black and white, free from exercises of judgment. They err on the side of caution, declaring potentially permitted behavior to be sin. They fence the Law. “The Law is good, if one uses it lawfully.”<sup>56</sup> Fencing the Law is harmful. There is a reason a curse lies upon those who would add to the Law. The Law is an expression of God’s character, an explanation through examples and principles of who God is, who our neighbor is, and what it means to love God and love our neighbor. Far from prohibiting us pleasure – do not touch, do not taste – the Law is designed to bring life, to protect us from those things which would harm us, and lead us to Him who satisfies our souls. Prohibiting what has been permitted, replacing the complexities of life with a simplistic morality, denies us life and distorts the image of God in the Law.

So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days.<sup>57</sup>

Some examples of “grey areas” that come up with younger men. Is drinking alcoholic beverages a sin? If not, where is the line between enjoyment and drunkenness? How do you learn to drink in moderation? Is drinking a sin while I am a minor? Speeding – submitting to the laws of the land. Gluttony – when have I exceeded “eating like a teenager”?

Two obvious, big areas are lust and girlfriends. Sin often works by twisting a natural desire to excess. Sexual desire is natural and healthy. It is unfortunate that our current culture continues to delay marriage till later in life. You should walk through these things with your guys. Their bodies are flooded with hormones, their media is filled with erotic images. Is there a distinction between sinful lust and healthy sexual fantasy? Are there any healthy outlets for these desires before marriage, and, if so, how can I explore those in a way that brings life? How ought I deal with a mind that has become polluted by or addicted to pornography? What does a healthy physical relationship with my girlfriend look like? How do I fix this unhealthy physical relationship? Won’t it be easier to fix my addiction to pornography after I’m married? How is wrestling with these things now preparing me for better marriage later? It’s a good thing you have clear and life-giving answers to these questions, because the younger men you serve need those answers, and so do I.

We should fear God, not sin. The fear of sin leads to legalistic rule-making and breaking – avoiding life for fear of irreparable failure. The fear of God mixed with faith in Christ leads us to trust that God, and His

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<sup>56</sup>1 Timothy 1:8

<sup>57</sup>Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Law, is for us and our good, and that He will redeem our failures.

# Practicalities

## **How do I find / choose a younger man to mentor?**

Talk to God, talk to the pastors and then talk to the parents. I do not ask big commitments from my guys, but I make big commitments to them. So I am slow to choose. I want a clear word from God before I decide.

## **What do I do during the first few times we meet?**

For most of the younger men you will serve, their relationship with you is the first intentional relationship they will have experienced. Their family, friends, teachers, etc. *just happened*, and often, *happened to* them. You are a choice. I emphasize that. I talk about what I am committing to do (pray for them, share my life openly and honestly with them) and what they can ask me to do (hold them accountable, hang out, offer advice). I talk about the process and goal of mentoring. I discuss the trust needed for us to open our lives to one another, and talk about when and why I, or they, should breach the confidentiality that is assumed to exist throughout the mentoring relationship. I give them control of the relationship. They get to decide how much they share with me. I describe how I will invite them to become a part of my life and share their lives with me, and that those invitations are theirs to accept or reject. The commitment I ask from them is that they act like men, that they be honest with me and use me to become better men. The first couple of meetings with most younger men are probably too early for serious discussions about sex or pornography, but it should be made clear up front that those discussions are invited by you and will be initiated by you in future meetings.

## **How do I communicate with my guys?**

Wherever they communicate. I have managed to avoid twitter so far, I escaped Facebook, and I don't know that I've ever seen Instagram or Snapchat. But I send many texts, and many long texts. Occasionally phone

calls. Occasionally email. Most conversations, though, happen in person, late at night.

Younger men are often pretty bad at responding to any form of communication, even in-person conversations, but especially texts and other messaging. If they respond, they often do so after a long time and, even then, with an ambiguous textual equivalent of a grunt. Accept their poor communication. It is not a battle worth having. Your model of prompt, clear communication, combined with their own growth, will lead to better habits.

In my experience, the best times to have deep conversations with younger men are unscheduled and unexpected times, generally late at night, often around a fire late at night, after a long day of work or games late at night, late at night before an early morning.

### **Should I meet with them one on one or in groups? What size groups?**

I have in the past and continue now to meet with both individuals and groups. I often alternate between meeting with guys individually and then getting them together as a group. For groups that consistently meet as a group, I would limit the size to 3, or at most 4 if there was enough trust and openness among the 4.

A small group of 2 or 3 can be less intimidating than meeting one on one, and groups are easier to keep entertained because they feed off of each other. Groups are venues where younger men can learn and practice walking alongside others before God. Their encouragement of and prayer for one another is powerful.

But there is also a place for individual encouragement and accountability. Use discretion and pay attention to individual personalities and diverging needs of individuals within a group. There may be times when you need to pull one guy aside from the group and have a conversation or just hang out, in order to effectively serve him.

### **How often should I meet with them?**

Every week, every two weeks, once a month, once every few months. You should not take all of their time. They need to have rich lives. If your time together is fruitful, or if there is a special need for more focused work and they are receptive to that, then meet more often. If they have well-established disciplines and are growing in them, or they are in a less receptive stage, then meet less often.

There are times when they are less receptive, or seemingly completely closed, to you, unwilling to grant you any power to speak into their lives. It is important to persevere through those times, to continue meeting

regularly even though the time seems unfruitful. Droughts grow the soul in ways that rain cannot. Be faithful to them as God has been faithful to you in your rebellions.

## How long does it take?

A day with the Lord is like a thousand years, and thousand years like a day.<sup>58</sup>

What is “it”? It takes a lifetime to attain Paul’s prize. It takes an hour to hang out with a younger man and meaningfully build him up in Christ. I think *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*<sup>59</sup> suggested that it takes, on average, 7 years to grow a young disciple into a disciple-maker. Your success is not measured by how many younger men you take all the way to disciple-makers. Your success is determined only by God, and is based upon your faithfulness in utilizing the gifts He has given you to serve Him and bring Him glory. “Make the most of the time.”<sup>60</sup> If you are given an hour, work that hour. If you are given a decade, work that decade.

## Where do I go if I have problems or questions?

To the men you have been intentional about bringing into your life who are above you, who watch over your soul. To the men you have been intentional about bringing into your life who are beside you, who walk with you through life. To your pastors. You should be going to these men regularly – questions, problems, or not. Part of their work is to catch issues before they become problems.

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<sup>58</sup> 2 Peter 3:8

<sup>59</sup> Leroy Eims, 1978.

<sup>60</sup> Ephesians 5:16



# Discipling Younger Men

## Younger Men

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.<sup>61</sup>

I use the term “younger men” intentionally. These are not children. We fail to effectively serve them when we treat younger men as kids. If there is such a thing as an “age of innocence”, traditionally the age would end around 12 or 13. Whether or not there is an age of innocence, by the time they reach 6th, 7th, 8th grade those boys have become younger men.

They are men. They stand before the same God as you. They owe the same honor and obedience to that God as you.

But they are younger. They have less experience than you. They do not understand their responsibilities as men before God as fully as you do. They have not learned how to fulfill those responsibilities as you have.

I say “younger” and not simply “young” to emphasize the *process* of maturing as opposed to a *state* of immaturity. They are not just young men. They are younger men who are growing. Every younger man is different – they have gone through different experiences, show different levels of maturity, grow into maturity in different ways and at different rates, and are growing into different older men.

Let no one look down on your youthfulness.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>1 John 2:12-14

<sup>62</sup>1 Timothy 4:12

Here is a test to identify whether or not you see these younger men as men or children. Imagine some threat rising up against them, some harm or hardship headed their way. Where are you standing? With women and children, your natural response as a man is (or ought to be) to stand in front of them, between them and the threat. When other men are threatened, you stand beside them. You change a woman's flat tire. You help a man change a flat, and that only if he asks you.

... but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.<sup>63</sup>

Expect much from them. Bear with their immaturity, but always expect them to live as the men they are. Respect them as men. Trust them as men. Hope for them as men whose Master is able to make them stand.<sup>64</sup> Let them rise to your expectations.

Be patient. God took His sweet time getting you this far, and you still have quite a ways to go. God grows them, not you.

## Parents

You are coming alongside the parents of these younger men, but you are not their parent. Parent's have higher and different responsibilities towards their children than you have towards your guys.

You should model submission to your parents and encourage your guys to submit to theirs. Submitting to the authority of parents is a model of and practical working out of submission to Christ, and a command of God.

It is important that there be boundaries between you and their parents. Your guys need to trust that they can share their lives with you without every detail being reported to their parents. Their parents need to trust you to tell them when there is something they need to know in order that they may effectively serve their children. Ideally, if there is something about a younger man that needs to be shared with that man's parents, that man himself will do so. Work with your guys to learn how to talk with their parents. If there is something that the parents need to know, and your guy is not willing to share it with them, he needs to know when you go to share it with his parents.

As you serve this younger man, you might see a very different side of their parents than most other people. Be very careful not to tell parents how to do their job. Help the guys you serve to be understanding towards their parents.

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<sup>63</sup>1 Timothy 4:12

<sup>64</sup>Romans 14:4

It is important to talk with the parents before beginning to mentor their son. You, and their son, need their permission. They need to understand what your role is and what they should expect from you and from the relationship. They need to know how to contact you. It will probably be helpful to check in with them occasionally. Consider asking them during these check-ins if there are areas they are working on with their son that you can join them in addressing.

There are younger men in the church who come from broken homes, from homes where the parents do not believe, or do not live as though they believe, or are otherwise “difficult”. “Honor your parents” does not have exceptions for bad parents. Lost parents are an opportunity for you and your guy to invite them to come to Christ. Unrepentant parents should be presented to pastors for guidance and, if necessary, church discipline. Difficult parents are an opportunity to learn how to obey Christ when it is not easy.

I was working with a younger man from a broken home who got into some things he shouldn't have. I didn't know about it until afterwards. It was a problem and needed to be addressed, but also something “common to man”<sup>65</sup>. His mom found him out. Within 2 hours, she had shaved his head and had him standing on the street corner in front of his high school holding a sign declaring his wrong. She called all of his extra-curricular teachers and tried to have him kicked out of their programs. He had “permanently lost her trust” and “irreparably destroyed their relationship.” He was kept isolated from the church, from his friends and from me for several weeks. None of this was an appropriate response. Her behavior brought separation and death, rather than restoration.

He and I finally got to talk for a few minutes when his mom (she did not attend a church) came to church and brought him. It was crucial that he be assured of God's forgiveness and continued love. That he did not need to feel any shame in front of me. That things were going to work out for good. After that, it was important that he remember to submit to his mom even in this. In this particular situation, I didn't even get a chance to bring up honoring his mom. He brought it up – talking about how mad he had been with her at first, and then how he had realized that she was a sinner like him and he needed to be understanding and submissive. What he most wanted to talk about was not how he had been mistreated, but rather how excited he was that his mom was at church.

parents (are they also my assignment?, differences in handling parents who are lost vs those in church, possibility of subverting the parent's roles, examples of what is confidential and what should be shared.)

There are claims that parents are or ought to be the “primary disciplers” of their children. Where is this in the text? It's not. Deut 6 specifically uses a different word when it says that Fathers ought to teach their children (“disciples” = “talmidim” which is from “limmud” hebrew for teach, or really goad like an ox, but

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<sup>65</sup>1 Corinthians 10:13

deut 6 fathers shannaz or sharpen your sons.). There is little to suggest discipleship and nothing to suggest primary. I don't even know what primary is supposed to mean here. The claim is coming from a desire to push back on consumer Christianity, where parents drop their kids off to be taught about God by the church. But the reaction goes too far and is not grounded in the Word. Parents are essential, important, responsible, obligated to teach, admonish and raise up their children. But they are not called "primary" and they are not called disciplers. And the church is not called alongside them. Whoever does not hate his father and mother cannot be my disciple.

## Friends

You are their friend, but they are not your friend.

Part of the process of mentoring will require you to open up your life to your guys, and they will likely open up their lives to you. There could be things about your life that they know that few other people in your life know. In relationships with your friends (those beside you) and your mentors (those above you), the intimacy with an other that flows out of that kind of openness comes with the freedom to rely on the other. You cannot let yourself lean on these younger men. You need other people that you can lean on. These younger men need to be able to lean on you. You are their friend. But you cannot lean on them. They are not your friends.

With your friends, there are topics that you cannot speak about without being invited. You likely don't give just any of your friends advice about how to handle their money. You likely don't ask your friends how healthy their sexual relationship is with their wife. Your friends could invite you to talk about these things, but without that invitation or without clear and unrepentant sin, you don't have the right to talk about those things. It is not the same with your guys. You have obligations to speak into the lives of your guys about many things that would otherwise be off-limits with friends.

When the mentoring relationship is complete, they will become your friend as you have been theirs. This transition should not pass unmentioned. Set up a pillar<sup>66</sup>, mark the event, throw a party.

## Social Media

Social Media and relationships. The addictive nature of social media, texting, etc. How those lead to superficial relationships. The importance of putting your phone away.

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<sup>66</sup>1 Samuel 7:12, Genesis 28:18

## Earning the privilege

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.<sup>67</sup>

Pastors have authority. Kings have authority. Parents have authority. Authority given by God, that flows out of responsibilities towards those over whom they are to exercise their authority. For the most part, these positions of authority are not voluntary. You do not choose your parents. You have little choice regarding the many “kings” over you. A mentoring relationship, however, is voluntary. You choose to serve them and they choose to let you serve them. To speak into their lives, to have them hear you when you speak into their lives, is a privilege to be earned, not a right granted by your position. You work to build up the power to speak into their lives, and then you spend that power by speaking into their lives. Spend that power carefully, on things that matter, at times when your words will be heard.

They will not, generally, grant you the privilege of being heard easily. The most effective ways to earn the power to speak into the lives of younger men are authenticity and openness on your part about your life, especially the hard things; respect for them, treating them as men, empowering them to exercise control; and, most importantly, time, lots of time, being present with them, “hanging out”, doing “nothing”.

The power to speak that you earn is valuable because of the time and work it takes to earn it, so spend it wisely. The power to speak that you earn expires quickly and unpredictably, so spend it. Attempting to use more power than you have earned will fail – they will not listen and they will make it harder to earn more power to speak later. Sometimes you have to choose between encouraging them to spend time in the Word or encouraging them to come to church. Confronting them about sin, especially sin they have not previously acknowledged, is very expensive.

Even earned power can only effectively be spent on things concerning which they permit you to speak. A few months ago, after a harsh breakup, he was willing to let you speak about how he relates to his girlfriends; however, that topic is off limits right now in the middle of his new relationship. Trying to talk about it now will use up a lot of power and fall on deaf ears.

Acknowledge the voluntary nature of the mentoring relationship up front. Grant them control. Remind them that you have committed to being open with them, but they continually get to choose how much they share with you and what they permit you to speak about. Respect the decisions that they make. You can give them invitations to change their decisions later, but honor their choice today.

To the extent that they let you in, to the extent that they submit to you, listen to you, let you “watch over their souls”, to that extent you will give an account to God for the way you served them, for how well you

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<sup>67</sup>Hebrew 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1ff

built them up into maturity in Christ.

## **Acceptance, Affirmation, Affection**

This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!<sup>68</sup>

Parents model both the love and lordship of God; however, a mentor has not been given the authority necessary to model lordship by “lording it over”<sup>69</sup> the younger men they serve. To faithfully imitate Christ, and therefore live a life worthy of imitation, you must model the love of God. It happens that what younger men most desire and will most respond to is this kind of love.

They need to be accepted. “This is my beloved Son.” They need to know that you have chosen them. They need to know that you accept them, even though they are broken and sinful. They need to know that your acceptance of them is predicated upon your choice, not their character or actions. They need to see these things in you, so that they can understand them about God.

They need to be shown affection. “My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased.” They need to know you love them and care about them, even though they are broken sinners. They need to know that they cannot lose your love. You need to discover what makes them feel loved: a handshake, a hug, words, time, a gift. They need to see this kind of love in you so that they can understand the love of God.

They need to be affirmed. “With whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him.” Build them up. Tell them you are proud of them. Tell them specifically what you have seen in their lives that makes you proud of them. Praise them publicly, call out those around you to respect them. Affirmations are not free, you still have to earn the right to speak them (and affection and acceptance) into their lives, but they reach far deeper than instruction or correction. They need to feel your affirmations of them if they are to have any hope of comprehending the significance of God considering us “a rich and glorious inheritance”<sup>70</sup>, or the value of “Well done, My good and faithful servant.”<sup>71</sup>

Do not say anything that you do not mean. Your failure to be authentic will be immediately recognized by those you serve. We crave authenticity and everything this world offers is fake. Join the world in being fake and you will join Geico ads – muted and then skipped on their way to that next funny cat video.

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<sup>68</sup>Matthew 17:5

<sup>69</sup>1 Peter 5:3, Matthew 20:25

<sup>70</sup>Ephesians 1:18

<sup>71</sup>Matthew 25:21

## Social Pressure

If you are serving younger men effectively, they will grow to trust you, to desire your acceptance, affirmation and affection, to want your friendship and your time. You will have a relationship with them. You will be a part of their lives. This gives you leverage over them. You can use your relationship to put pressure on them to change their behavior. Using this leverage can take the form of the seemingly innocent, “I care about you and I’m worried that if you continue doing x, you are going to get hurt.” On the other extreme it looks like, “Until you get x straightened out, I can’t meet with you anymore.”

Any application of social pressure, any attempt to leverage your relationship to change the behavior of the younger men you serve, no matter how gentle or well-intentioned, is wrong. It is an attempt to drive change based upon fear. God never treats us like that. He never places conditions on His continued relationship with us. His love for us is never on the table to be bargained with. He does not use fear of anything other than Himself to motivate us.

Using social pressure to accomplish change gives me the power and the glory. I decide what behavior needs to change, and when and how to change it. I am the reason for the change. I have not fixed the brokenness in their soul that drove the original behavior. I have not taught them more of God. I have not brought them closer to God. If my application of social pressure fails, I have broken our relationship. If it succeeds, I have made this younger man dependent upon me – he looks like he’s standing, but I’m holding him up. And now when I fail (and I will), I have the pleasure of watching this man stumble as well.

To his own Master, he stands or falls; and he will stand, for God is able to make him stand.<sup>72</sup>

When the temptation to apply social pressure arises, put God back in the center. You ought not be worried about the future of this younger man, because God has him and his future. If bad things happen, God will work them out for our good and His glory. Imitate Christ – affirm His and your continuing relationship with him while inviting him to grow and waiting patiently for God to work.

You can use the access that your relationship gives you to speak into their lives, to give them a swift kick in the pants if that is what they need. However, these conversations should be founded in hope, not fear, and designed to push them to God, not to or away from you.

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<sup>72</sup>Romans 14:4

# Manhood

## Modeling

The younger men you serve should find in you an example of what a man is and does. I don't say "godly man", because a man who isn't godly isn't a man, he's just a male.

A man understands what his responsibilities are and to whom he owes them. He knows who has authority over him and he submits to those authorities. He knows whom he has authority over, and he uses his authority to provide, protect and lead them in order that they might flourish before their God. A man knows where he is weak, and is actively working to be a better man. A man establishes plans for meeting all of his responsibilities. A man works his plans and evolves his plans as circumstances change.

One implication of this is that the mentoring being described here cannot be applied to the lost. A lost young male does not know God and so he cannot know himself. He does not submit to Christ, and so he does not understand his responsibilities, nor is he empowered by the Spirit to live those responsibilities. He is dead and enslaved to sin. He is not a man. Until he comes to saving faith in and submission to Jesus, it would be a mistake to treat him as a man.

## Calling to

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.<sup>73</sup>

Manhood begins at salvation

The younger men you serve need to be told that they are men and called to live as men.

Ideally, their dads will do this. Their dads should be modeling manhood and discussing what it means to be

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<sup>73</sup>1 Corinthians 13:11



a man as their sons grow. Then, when they see that their sons are ready, they should organize a trip or event or ceremony in which they declare their sons to be men, and call them to live as the men they have been taught to be. This moment should not just be words, but should change how the son sees himself and how he is seen and treated by his dad. To the extent that the dads permit you, encourage them to do this with their sons. And help prepare the sons. If the dad does do something, affirm in your guy the changed state. Treat him as a man and expect those around you to do the same.

If the dad won't do something and won't let you discuss it with him, prepare a ceremony of some sort yourself. It's important. Even if the younger man is old enough and mature enough that he has been a man for a while, make a point of setting aside a time to affirm to him that he is a man, that you have seen x, y and z specific manly qualities in him, and then call him to continue live and grow as a man.

# Women

## Relating

Is there “the One”? what do you look for? Preparing yourself. Neither of you should be dependent upon anything but God for your identity, value, purpose.

Younger men need to be taught how to relate to women. As men, they are called to protect, provide and lead women.

At their stage in life, younger men do not generally have many opportunities to provide or lead; however, they have many opportunities to protect. They easily grasp the need to protect women from other men. But it is important that your guys understand that they themselves can easily harm the women in their lives and that they have a responsibility to prevent themselves from doing so. One of the effects of the fall on women is a tendency to look for their identity and acceptance from men rather than God. The women these younger men date can easily and quickly grow attached to and dependent upon them, and this attachment can cause a lot of harm when the relationship ends, as it likely will. They can protect their girlfriends by avoiding behaviors that will invite those women to become more attached to them than the commitments that have been made will support.

Providing for your wife and family requires an education, learning the skills and information you will need to build a career. It requires making longer term plans and holding to those plans. It requires managing money wisely. Many younger men have never made a budget. Many have never tithed. Teach them those disciplines.

You should talk with your guys about what they should look for in a woman as they look for a wife. She should walk with God. She should be independent – it is unhealthy for either the husband or the wife to be dependent upon the other for peace, satisfaction, identity, acceptance. She should empower and inspire him to be a better man of God. She should be someone he wants to empower and inspire to be a better woman of God.

No woman will complete you or fix you. If God is not enough for you, then everything else will fail you.

## Love

Following Shakespeare, love and marriage have been romanticized to the point that our culture sees love as only emotion and marriage as only about love and our happiness. Somewhere out there is the one and when you find her, you will fall in love. She will be your princess, the one who satisfies your soul, the one for whom you would defy the gods and sacrifice everything else of worth or value to keep. Every moment with her will be sunshine. And if the sun ever stops shining, obviously she was not the one, so it's best for both of you to drop it and go find someone else. I hear that bars, especially loud, dark ones with flashing lights and fat beats, are good places to look.

If the Law demonstrates anything, it demonstrates that love is primarily behavior that flows out of commitment, and only secondarily the feelings that are sporadically evoked by that behavior. Actually that simplifies too much. Generally feelings (erroneously labelled "love") prompt the commitment to act lovingly, and then the actions flowing out of that commitment (actually "loving" someone as opposed to feeling love towards them) lead to more and often different feelings. In trying to unpack a Biblical understanding of love with younger men, I've found it helpful to walk with them through the latter half of the Gospel of John where Jesus intertwines love for God, obedience to God and knowledge of God in ways that make the three inseparable.

There is not *the one* out there and younger men should not be looking for a girl to *fall in love* with. They should be looking for a godly woman whom they want to protect, provide, lead, serve, know, and partner with for life. Their desire to do those things for her and their willingness to commit to her should not be based upon feelings, but rather upon their understanding of who they are as men before God.

Most discussions of love and marriage should include reflections on the implications of the theories about and future responsibilities found in love and marriage to the ways that your guys relate to the women around them today. The ways they treat their moms and sisters. The ways they treat younger women in the church. The ways they date and treat the women they are dating. How all of that prepares them for marriage, shapes them into men who will be worthy of the women they will want to marry.

## Sex

It is important to have open conversations about sex and pornography early on in the mentoring relationship. Waiting too long to broach these topics can lead to them becoming too awkward to talk about. You have

plenty of experience with both and you can remember (somewhat) what it feels like to be their age. Talk about what you know. Talk about where you failed and how those failures brought death and separation from God, and others, into your life. Talk about how God has brought you through those things.

Sexual immorality is often made to be *the thing* when working with younger men. It is not. It is just one sin among many. There are other important things. God will deal with this sin in their lives gradually and in His time as with all of their other brokenness.

# College and Career

## Plans

Add sections for Work/Career (Plans, God is for you, wisdom, chasing His joy)

Free of fear.

## College

college (preparing, people are more important, the experience, recreating yourself, discovering gifts, figuring out assignments) Disciplines: Prayer, BS, Worship, Fellowship, Service - In context of local church. Local church: but recognize that college makes that weird. Join campus groups. Lead and serve. People Matter Most. Invest in them. Friends - support, growth, networking. Professors. School/class/homework is not the highest priority. Make plans, work those plans, evolve those plans. Choose your friends. You can recreate yourself. - I think that's 90% of what you're feeling that feels like loneliness. Not so much that you don't have a pile of close friends already, but you're feeling the impact of all of your relationships with people back here behind suddenly and irreversibly changed. It's different than missing us. You miss people when you go on a trip. You're not on a trip. You've left home in a way that means that home isn't home anymore, you're building a new home. You're growing and changing and this old home won't ever feel the same to you and you won't fit in it the same way when you come back. And you know it and you feel it and it hurts. Your parents feel it too - I mean there's a bunch of other crap in there too, but the healthy part of it is that pain. And it is a healthy pain, mourning the changes in all of those relationships. Relationships are the thing, the most important thing, the reason God is Trinity and the reason He made us, the reason He made woman. Jesus and I have gone on several walks this summer before and after you left mourning the change in you and my relationship. But it's good. I'm fully excited for you, confident in you and proud of you. Home is going to be a nebulous thing for a while. It's not back here for you. And it's not there either. You're going to have to make it and carry it around with you. Make home people, not a place or a thing.

Make God home.

## **Career**

Choosing. Money.

## **Money**

Budgeting. Borrowing. Tithing. God makes you to prosper. Providing for family. Being mastered by money.

Make friends with unrighteous mammon.

# Common Mistakes in Student Ministry

Common youth ministry mistakes: Curriculum/programs rather than people. Focusing on behavior modification / rule following rather than relationship. Assuming no growth - same methods, lessons, goals etc for 6th grade girls as for 12th grade guys. No transition to adulthood. Ministry ends at high school graduation. Identifying friendships as cliques and so interfering with community. Treating students as not really part of church, having little giftedness with which to serve, so just an audience to be performed for. Co-parenting.