

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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The Case for Mentorship



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Prophet, Shepherd, Coach

“Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you or forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed’” (Deut. 31:7–8).

The younger man stood at the edge of the plains of Moab in disbelief as he listened with fear and trembling to the delivery of what he knew would be Moses’ final doxology. From this day forward he was to continue without him. It would be Joshua, not Moses, who would lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Was he capable of leading this people, defeating armies and finally settling in the Land God promised them? Yes, he was! How many times had he been privileged to leave Moses’ presence with just the revelation he needed? How often had he stood in awe as he watched Moses execute divine wisdom in the midst of people and situations? How many miles had he traveled side by side with this man, observing every move, hanging on every word? Now, full of the spirit of wisdom, and drawing from the intimate coaching he received from Moses, Joshua would take the lead. He was ready.

Teacher, Pastor, Father

The old rabbi and apostle sat in the darkness of his prison cell and penned what would be the concluding letter of his life. Throughout his many years of ministry, Paul’s letters brought instruction, correction and edification. Each one was written with deep, fatherly love. Now, imprisoned in Rome and facing sure death, he began with, *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a beloved son:”* (2 Tim. 1:1–2a).

Questions began to flood his mind: *“Will the churches continue without me? How will they grow in number? How will they grow in Spirit? Can they survive such intense persecution?”* Then he was overcome by a sudden peace as his thoughts drifted to the young man to whom he penned his final letter—Timothy, his disciple, his follower, his true son in the faith.

The Case for Mentorship

Recently I find myself engaging in conversations of varying subject matters that seem to lead to the topic of **mentorship**. Whether the discussion is about finances or marriage or career, I am witnessing an urgent desire within young people to receive wise counsel from older generations.

In fact, a study conducted in 2013 showed that 45% of unchurched young adults identified the opportunity to receive advice from people from older generations as very important while 68% of *churched* young adults identified the opportunity to receive advice from people from older generations as very important. Through this study we see that whether they attend church or not, young people recognize the importance and desire mentorship.

45%
unchurched
young adults

68%
churched
young adults

Both identified the opportunity to receive advice from people from older generations as very important.

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Even greater than a *desire* for mentorship is the *need* for mentorship.

A survey conducted by Thom and Jess Rainer for their book, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*, found that members of the current young adult generation are likely to have a syncretistic belief system.

This means they will take portions of belief from various faiths and non-faiths and blend them together into a unique spiritual system. This belief system is often at the core of young people who consider themselves “evangelicals” or “born again.” The result is a generation whose religion is less biblically-based than any other previous generation.

Many of today's young adults believe that you cannot know what happens to you when you die, are in favor of same-sex marriage, cohabit before marriage (65 %) and laugh at the idea of a young earth. A Pew Research survey conducted in 2015 showed that 46% of Millennials (those born between 1979 and 2000) come from broken homes. This means that almost half of the young people in our churches and communities were raised without a mother or a father in the home. These findings show us a generation with a void that many in the older generations can fill.



We were created for relationship with one another. When God created man and placed him in the garden, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and so He created Eve to be a helpmate (Gen. 2:18). God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28).

Relationships are one of the primary means God established for learning about and preserving His commandments.

We see emphasis placed on these close relationships throughout the word of God, in the *Tanakh* (Gen.–Mal.), the teachings of Jesus, and throughout the Writings of the Apostles. For example:

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up” (Eccles. 4:9–10).

“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Prov. 27:17).

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ And the second, like it is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31).

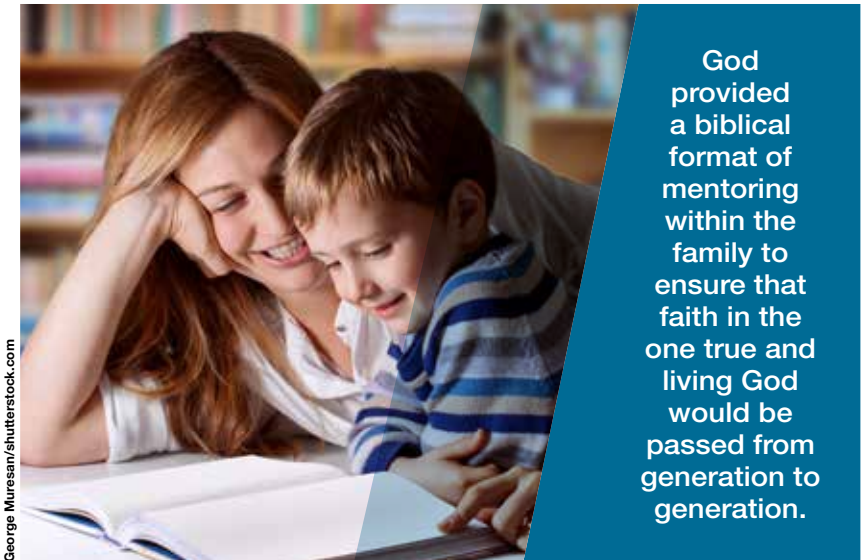
“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, able also to admonish [instruct] one another” (Rom. 15:14).

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:24–25).

“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil. 4:9).

While the word *mentor* is never used in the Bible, we see many examples, which lead to the conclusion that mentorship does come from and supports a biblical worldview. **The concept of mentoring is at least as old as the *Shema*** found in Deuteronomy 6:4. In the following passage, God provided a biblical format of mentoring within the family to ensure that faith in the one true and living God would be passed from generation to generation.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words that I command you today shall be in your hearts. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:4–9).



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As we continue through Scripture, we see many instances of mentoring relationships; relationships ordained by God to produce growth and transference of wisdom and experience.

Mentoring Relationships

Transfer wisdom

Produce growth

Share experience



Let's take a look at a few of these illustrations:

- In Exodus 18 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, acted as a mentor after he observed Moses trying to solve all the disputes of the Israelites single-handedly.
- Early in the wilderness journey Moses began to mentor Joshua (Deut. 31 and 34). Years later, God chose Joshua to be the next leader of the Israelites because he had Moses' spirit and had been mentored for the leadership position.
- In 1 Kings 19 and 2 Kings 2 Elisha was prepared for his prophetic ministry through his close relationship with the prophet Elijah. When Elijah was taken up into heaven, his mantle fell on Elisha who then received a double portion of his mentor's spirit.
- The book of Luke in the Writings of the Apostles tells us that Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, mentored Mary after she learned she was to be the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth, being filled with the Holy Spirit, reaffirmed the work of God in Mary's life.
- We read that Barnabas was a mentor to Paul (Acts 4, 9, and 11). The Apostle Paul became a great spiritual leader and authored 14 books in the Writings of the Apostles.
- In Acts 16, Philippians 2 and 1 and 2 Timothy we read that Paul was a mentor to Timothy and described the young man as being "like-minded" with him in his commitment to serving God. Their relationship was so strong that Paul called it a father-son relationship.



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Another substantial illustration we find of mentoring in the Bible is in the relationship between Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth had such an intimate relationship with Naomi that she refused to leave her for any reason (Ruth 1:16). As a result, Naomi helped Ruth understand the laws and customs of the Israelites. Together, these two women embarked on a journey of discipleship and destiny; of spiritual mothering and devoted spiritual daughter; of mentoring and healing that would forever transform and change their lives.

Is it possible that the Apostle Paul thought of these two women when he instructed his trusted helper, Titus, in how various groups in the church must be taught to live (Titus 2)? Paul clearly desired that older women live holy lives so that they could teach younger women. In Titus 2:3–5 older **women** are admonished to mentor younger women in **relationships** (loving husbands and children), God-glorifying **characteristics** (discretion or self-control, chastity, goodness or kindness) and **practical issues** (domesticity).

Speaking to the **men** in the Church he said, *“Similarly, encourage the young men to be **self-controlled**. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show **integrity, seriousness** and **soundness of speech** that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us”* (Titus 2:6–8 NIV emphasis added).



What Does a Mentoring Relationship Look Like?

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1. A mentor models a life to be envied.

Nobody is perfect. And nobody should expect perfection from another. What creates a mentoring relationship, however, is when one person sees in another something that makes them declare, “I want what they’ve got!” We see evidence of Naomi’s righteousness in the relationship she has with her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Throughout their time together Ruth witnessed such uprightness in Naomi that when Naomi tried to send Ruth and her sister-in-law, Orpah, away Ruth would not leave. She clung to Naomi and pleaded with her, “*Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God*” (Ruth 1:16).

2. A mentor does not discount someone because of differences.

In the story of Ruth and Naomi we see how two women, from different places, backgrounds and religions, came together and forged a covenant relationship between themselves and God. It was not biology, gender, race, religion or culture that bound them together; it was God. Naomi mentored a young woman from an entirely different religion and culture. Surely they had little if anything in common. There were probably very few, if any points on which Naomi could “relate” to Ruth. Yet, Naomi took on the task and lived the rest of her days pouring into Ruth.

3. A mentor pours out from the well of experience.

Once, while receiving people in *yechidut* (private audience), Rebbe DovBer of Lubavitch (1773–1827) suddenly locked his door and refused to see anyone for many hours. Chassidim standing outside his door heard their Rebbe weeping and praying. Following this incident, the Rebbe was so weakened that he was confined to his bed for several days.

Later, one of the elder Chassidim dared to ask the Rebbe what had occurred. Rebbe DovBer explained: “When a person seeks my assistance in curing his spiritual ills, I must first find the same failing—be it in the most subtle of forms—within my own self. For it is not possible for me to help him unless I myself have already experienced the same problem and undergone the same process of self-refinement.

“On that day, someone came to me with a problem. I was horrified to hear to what depths he had fallen, G-d forbid. Try as I might, I could not find within myself anything even remotely resembling what he told me.

“But Divine Providence had sent this man to me,” concluded the Rebbe. “So I knew that somewhere, somehow, there was something in me that could relate to his situation. The thought shook me to the very core of my soul and moved me to repent and return to G-d from the depths of my heart.”

4. A mentor passes on a passion for the things they're most passionate about.

Naomi passed on to Ruth a passion for her God. Moses bestowed on Joshua a passion for the people of Israel and a desire to arrive at the Promised Land. Paul instilled in Timothy a passion for the churches and for the work of the ministry. What are you passionate about?



5. A mentor creates and nurtures opportunities for their mentee to grow.

There is an old saying, which speaks to the art of mentoring: “Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand.” Effective mentors do not have all the answers. Instead, they walk with their mentees through the process of discovering all the blessings and benefits of hearing and obeying God.

6. A mentor prays for the one being mentored.

The mentor does not only model a holy life, he or she should also pray for the one they are mentoring. This is where spiritual battles are won and lost. Paul opened many of his letters with the comment that he has prayed for the believers

he is trying to teach (Phil. 1:3–6; 1 Thess. 1:2, 3; 3:10–13; etc.). We should pray that God would give us a person we can mentor, as well as pray for that person through the process.

7. A mentor trains the mentee to train others.

One of the greatest joys of a spiritual mentor is to see his mentee turn around and begin mentoring others. Paul told his disciple Timothy that the things he learned from their mentoring relationship should be taught to others. But the process does not stop there. Paul said that Timothy should train his disciples to train other disciples (2 Tim. 2:2).

8. Mentorship and the “Law of Multiplication”

The conclusive result of mentoring relationships should be more mentoring relationships. We see the law of multiplication instituted from the very beginning of time. After the completion of the crown of creation, man and woman, God said to them, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...*” (Gen. 1:28). We see this command streamed throughout Scripture. After the flood in Genesis 9:1, God blessed Noah, telling him to be fruitful and multiply. Jacob received this command twice—once as his father Isaac was sending him out to find a wife (Gen. 28:3) and a second time when God changed his name to Israel and commanded him to “*Be fruitful and multiply*” (Gen. 35:11).



“*Be fruitful
and multiply*”

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Whenever there was a “new beginning” in history, a “restart” so to speak, God commanded people to be fruitful and multiply... Then we come to the life and ministry of Jesus. His sinless life on earth, fulfillment of so much prophecy, fulfillment of the Law, death, burial and resurrection. And before He ascended to heaven, what did He command? He continued the theme of multiplication. The wording is different, but the message is unchanging:

“*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go therefore and make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.*” (Matt. 28:18–20 emphasis added).

Here we find the commands to be fruitful and multiply stretching far beyond the family unit, reaching to the very ends of the earth and ultimately arriving to you and me.

The Challenge

Several years ago I was introduced to the **20/20 Challenge**. Here's how it works: you find someone around 20 years older than yourself and purposefully spend time with him or her. Ask them about the greatest lessons they've learned in their lifetime. What habits served to strengthen their walk with God? Learn intentionally from this person. At the same time you should have someone about 20 years *younger* than you are that *you* are spending intentional, quality time with. Teach this person the greatest lessons *you've* learned in life. Where have you succeeded? Where have you failed? What are you passionate about? **Pass it on.**



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When you are with your mentor ask, "If you were my age, what would you want yourself to know?" When you are *mentoring*, share with your mentee what you wish you had known at *their* age.

You Are Qualified

Today I sat down to have one of my last mentoring moments with a young lady I have been mentoring for the past 10 months. We meet together every week for about an hour. We discuss life, family and work. Over the last several months she has given me a raw glimpse into who she is and why she is who she is. I know her to be a fighter and I know what created the fight in her. I know her hopes and anxieties regarding the future, and I know, probably better than she does, that her future is filled with greatness. In exchange for *her* vulnerability, I've given her mine. I've coached her from my personal experiences and I've been transparent to share my weaknesses with her.

Looking across the table today I saw a girl whose background is the complete opposite of mine. Reason told me I had nothing to offer her; that the two of us could never relate, much less develop an intimate friendship. But God ordained this relationship. He knew that He would fill me with the right words at the right time. He knew that I would listen when it was time to listen, pray when it was time to pray, and cry when it was time to cry. It has just been that simple. In addition, God knew that I desperately needed *her* to teach *me* a deeper level of compassion and nurturing.

We must remember that **God placed within us great purpose**, and part of that purpose, whether we feel qualified or not, is to be fruitful and multiply.

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I am witnessing an **urgent desire**
within young people to receive wise
counsel from older generations....

there is a void
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Scripture is taken from the New King James, unless otherwise noted.



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