

MENTOR LIKE JESUS: HIS RADICAL APPROACH TO BUILDING THE CHURCH

Campbell, Regi. Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church. RM Press, Atlanta, GA, 2009, 2016.

“Driven by a desire to teach ‘up and coming’ leaders how to integrate their personal faith into every facet of life, including the marketplace” - that is how Andy Stanley, Pastor of Northpoint Church, where the Radical Mentoring program and vision was birthed, lived, and practiced, summarizes the passion of founder Regi Campbell and defines the vision that roots the Radical Mentoring program.

Campbell himself describes his approach simply and humbly: “Radical Mentoring is just doing what Jesus did.” He goes on to make the case this way:

“What Jesus did that’s inarguable is mentor! Jesus mentored twelve guys for three years. It’s well documented...by four different authors, two of which were eyewitnesses and products of His mentoring process.

If there’s anything we should be able to learn from Jesus and replicate in our own lives, it’s mentoring. We have a documented model with proven results” (3).

It is this simple and straightforward description of mentoring being “what Jesus did” that captures my attention. “Mentor Like Jesus” also sounds like a pretty solid premise. It could be argued that Campbell has just re-packaged disciple-making under a more modern term with a broader definition, however, mentoring certainly fits as a specific aspect of a disciple-making paradigm, particularly as it relates to using an intentional relationship to grow God’s purposes in another. Campbell captures this disciple-making paradigm as he further defines Radical Mentoring - “intentionally investing in the next generation...for God’s glory” (3). So, while all aspects of his approach generally fit our definition of mentoring in *Immerse*, there are some distinct elements that inform a solid practice of the mentoring role in *Immerse*. It is these elements that will receive greater attention in this year’s **Mentoring Mastery** newsletter.

While there are a number of elements in Campbell’s approach that provide insight and value to our understanding of the mentoring role in the Immerse program, I think it would be helpful to first remind us that the role of an Immerse Mentor extends beyond a simple discipleship paradigm. While the effect of our role may be that a student is disciplined, and the actions in our role may serve the function of discipling the individual, the purpose of our role as Immerse Mentors is to ensure, evaluate, and assess that the outcomes which represent the standard of preparation and competency for ministry practice and leadership are developed and displayed for mastery at a graduate educational level.

Campbell presents eleven key ingredients as part of the Radical Mentoring approach in *Mentor Like Jesus*. I would further organize these key ingredients by grouping them into three sub-categories. The first of these subcategories brings definition to the context - an on purpose (1), selfless endeavour (2), in a group context (3), of hand-picked individuals (4), for a defined period of time (5). The second subcategory highlights the content and methodology of the approach - scripture (6),

prayer (7), and faith (8), taught along the way (9). The third subcategory addresses the cost, or expectations implicit in the investment that is being made - a mutual commitment (10) and required multiplication (11). These three sub-categories will frame the learning focus of the **Mentoring Mastery** newsletter over the course of this ministry year.

Section one begins to frame the context of Radical Mentoring, and the first component Campbell presents is “mentoring on purpose.” Purpose focuses attention on ‘why.’ It recognizes purpose-led living, describing the personal priority of the mentor to live their life on purpose. More than describing the process, it describes the motivation and contribution of the mentor. Jesus' example was a life on mission - and mentoring was the key strategy to fulfill His mission. Mentoring invites a person into relationship, with the goal of showing them how to be something. Campbell uses the word “embodiment” to describe who we are to the mentees. The incarnation describes Jesus' purpose in coming to the world - to show us a working model of God (27). In a similar way, the mentor is the embodiment of the Christian life, observable and accessible to the mentee. What are we looking to embody? What it means to be grateful, to grasp God's love, to be connected with the Father, how prayer marks our life, how the fruit of the spirit is projected, how to navigate life. And in that embodiment, a composite begins to emerge within the mentee...a way to believe, behave and belong.

Another characteristic of mentors that is drawn out is the idea of selflessness, the second component which frames another aspect that we bring to the context of mentoring like Jesus. Campbell describes this as “a drive or calling to give back...pay it forward” (34). It is evidenced in a willingness to invest our time in others, a recognition that it will often (if not always) be one-way, mentor to mentee, with no payback expected, just selfless giving. It is done with an attitude of gratitude - mentors primarily being givers, not takers. It acknowledges that our most valuable gift is our time and attention, and offers a precious gift to our mentees - someone who genuinely listens with no personal agenda. The selfless mentor is a good listener, dispensing their wisdom to meet the needs of their mentees, not their need to tell all they know. This investment is also a reflection of the mentor's commitment to the cause. Great mentors know who they are. They get joy in seeing their wisdom, knowledge, and experience live on to help others.

Campbell next makes an interesting case for implementing our mentoring practice in a group setting, which he calls “The Secret Sauce” (43). Most of us probably innately conceive of mentoring (and discipling) as a one-on-one relationship. However, Campbell begins this chapter with a compelling statement - “Jesus, the world's greatest mentor, worked with a group” (43). In describing this concept earlier, Campbell says, “Jesus knew the value of interaction between group members. The group became a community, inextricable from one another” (7). There are multiple practical benefits in using this approach. It allows friendships to emerge naturally. “It can set the individual relationships in motion and speed up the process of developing trust” (45). It is efficient and has a defined end. Campbell also points out a philosophic benefit of this approach, stating that mentoring in a group “is a facilitation model, not a teaching model” (52). In the absence of the expected “teacher”, there is room for the facilitator - someone who listens, asks good questions, and brings others into the conversation (53). In this model, there is opportunity for both mentor and mentee to learn - it is a two-way street. Campbell also insists that his particular method of facilitation recognizes that the goal is not to discuss abstract ideas, but about putting things into practice.

The fourth chapter addresses the practical process for entering into a Radical Mentoring group. A selection process allows the opportunity to say “no” or “later” when required, but it also has a positive effect on those who are selected - it makes them feel wanted, accepted, and like they belong (62). Campbell presents a number of helpful insights for the selection process. Seek those who are connected to your purpose - watch for Kingdom potential, future leaders, and those who would benefit the most from our training. Look for hunger in assessing the commitment level of the mentees, as well as teachability. Finally, one of Campbell's key characteristics in this regard is “a heart to pay it forward” (70). Campbell says, “The mentee I most want to invest in is one who is both committed, hungry to learn, and anxious to become a disciple-maker” (70).

My self-defined “context” section of *Mentoring Like Jesus* closes with a chapter addressing time. Campbell makes two significant points. First, there is “incredible value in setting a specific beginning and ending date for mentoring” (72). Second, time pressure brings focus. Both of these principles call us to invest our time wisely. Limited time requires that we focus on the essentials, determining what we are going to do, and how to get it done. Time pressure works for both the mentor and the mentee. Scarcity increases value, so we are tasked to choose the best to focus time and attention on.

The idea of “context” is probably not at the forefront of our minds as we consider our goal in ***Mentoring Mastery***, so let me draw out some principles that I see for us in our role and towards our goal.

The first principle that I would draw our attention to is that ***mentoring mastery assumes our willingness***. This is the backdrop for the success of our *Immerse* program. I was tempted to describe it as “determined willingness,” as often the reality of our mentoring role requires some determination on our part, but that would seem to me to take away from the humble and available attitude that appears to be at the core of success in mentoring - being willing to be used by God in the life of another. I believe Campbell captures the essence of the attitude required in the first two ingredients - an on purpose and selfless endeavour. You have heard me speak in terms of “investing” in future leaders. In my opinion, the description of mentoring as an investment captures the intentionality of the contribution that each of us is asked to make in the lives of our students. It has to be on purpose. The fact is, it will cost us something. Like any good investment, however, the cost is mitigated by the anticipated eventual reward - the expected growth of the asset we are investing in. It must also be a selfless endeavour. Northview can never compensate adequately for the investment that is being made, therefore, the motivation must come from within our being.

The second principle is ***trust the process***. I will confess that it has taken me some time to process and translate the group dynamic that Radical Mentoring draws upon. What I appreciate is that the dynamic that Campbell describes is a key part of understanding the complex nature of relationships and their contribution to effective learning. What I see are multiple levels of the group dynamic being facilitated in the *Immerse* program. First, there are the student cohorts themselves. Then there is the network of relationships with the Leadership Development department, pastoral and teaching staff, and the ministry department connections where ministry is applied. Finally, there are the Mentor Team interactions that shape and guide the student's learning experience. What I realize is that these layers build upon and feed off of each other to enhance the student learning environment and effectiveness. Ultimately, we can trust the process, realizing that God is using all of these facets of relationship to accomplish things that are both seen and not seen.

As Northview *Immerse* grows, the discernment process to identify those who enter the program becomes even more important - for both mentees and mentors. Principle three recognizes this - ***identify and invest in leaders with potential, not potential leaders***. The distinction is important. With considerable resources invested in each individual - human, time, and financial - the corresponding commitment and expectations towards our shared investment becomes noteworthy. The practical challenge for you and I is engaging at a level that will effectively realize the potential evident within the students selected to the program.

Finally, with limited time and resources available to us all, we would do well to ***cultivate an appropriate sense of urgency***. Campbell's emphasis is that limited time (by intention) brings greater focus. I would suggest that for mentors, *Immerse* mentoring falls under what Stephen Covey calls a Quadrant II activity, it is important, but not urgent. To students, their pursuit and completion of their education is both important and urgent. Trained leaders are also important and urgent to the mission of God. It would therefore seem logical that we should also elevate our sense of urgency appropriately for our role in this endeavour. Covey advises that the best way to ensure that Quadrant II activities find their rightful place in our lives is to plan for their inclusion before they are pushed aside by other plans and priorities.

In biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, understanding the context often serves to deepen our understanding of a passage of scripture and its application. My hope is that by framing the context of mentoring like Jesus in this way, our understanding of the mentoring role and process will be deepened, and will serve to help us better apply practices that will move us toward Mentoring Mastery.