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## **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.*

Last weekend I watched The Masters. Tiger Woods was once again in the spotlight, somewhat unexpectedly, considering a car accident two years ago nearly ended his playing career. Yet here he was, confidently vying for another major title in his already stellar and, perhaps, unequalled career as a professional golfer. For those of you who know me, even a little, it will come as no surprise that I follow this outstanding golfer's journey with great interest. But there is another story revolving around Tiger that I find even more intriguing and enjoyable. My attention and imagination were captured as I watched, with joy and amusement, Tiger and Charlie Woods participate in a comparatively insignificant golf tournament as a father-son duo. Knowing the significant role that Earl Woods (Tiger's dad) played in his son's development to the pinnacle of professional golf, I am watching with great interest Tiger's mentoring of his own son, perhaps (even hopefully) towards a career in professional golf.

Why? Consider Steph Currie's impact on professional basketball. He was mentored by his father, NBA professional Dell Currie. Or the Tkachuk brothers, Matthew and Brady, each NHL stars in their own right, following in the footsteps of their father, professional hockey player, Keith Tkachuk. There might be something worth discovering in the relationship between these mentoring relationships and their elevated achievement.

As we continue this year's journey towards Mentoring Mastery by drawing insight and principles from Regi Campbell's book, *Mentor Like Jesus: His Radical Approach to Building the Church*, we enter what I have defined as the second subcategory of the eleven key ingredients of his approach. This subcategory highlights the content and methodology of his approach. Allow me to summarize the content of these chapters before I draw some principles and application for Mentoring Mastery.

Our first chapter (#6) in this section is titled Truth at the Core, and begins with a list of famous mentor/mentee relationships to make a very significant point. Each of the mentors had a body of knowledge, truths if you will, of what they had learned in their field of expertise. The significance of these mentoring relationships was that in each field, their understanding of the body of knowledge was at a higher, more experienced level than the mentee (82). The effective transfer of this 'truth' from the mentor to the mentee served to not only transfer knowledge from one generation to the next, it effectively gave the mentee a head start, a tangible advantage, allowing the mentees' own learning to surpass their mentors. Campbell goes on to encourage what he refers to as a 'reinforcing of historical truth' - what we have learned from others - and ties it to the individual mentee's experience through two insightful statements. He says 'most of our real learning has come from our own experience' (84) and then adds, 'build on the truth you've inherited' - or in other words, take the truths shared with you, and those that you have learned through your own experience, and use them to advance to a new level of understanding and application. That is the lesson, and the insight, that backdrops the success of Steph Currie, the Tkachuk brothers, and hopefully - Charlie Woods.

In Chapter 7, Campbell addresses another vitally important core aspect of discipleship - prayer. In Campbell's setting, he is seeking to use his influence as a mentor to model an authentic and personable practice of prayer for his mentees. While modeling prayer in this way is not a stated expectation of the mentoring model we are pursuing in Immerse, the practice of prayer ought still to be central to our purpose. Campbell outlines three things that prayer does for us as mentors. First, it keeps us focused on our mentees and their needs. Next, prayer for their needs in turn gives insight into their hearts, a knowledge of what they care about and are focused on. Then, praying for them is a way of actively loving them. Additionally, Campbell identifies one more important aspect of prayer as practice, noting that it involves listening as well as talking, helping students learn to distinguish His (Jesus') voice from all others.

Chapter 8 is titled *Teaching by Doing*, and he introduces this concept by identifying an important distinctive of mentoring that is worth drawing to our attention. He describes mentoring as a unique methodology, contrasting it first to teaching by suggesting that a teacher can teach what he could never do himself, and next to coaching by noting that coaches usually coach what they could do long ago. The distinction is that mentoring involves teaching as you do something. "Mentoring occurs as you're doing life together...being 'in the moment'... interactive..." (103). He then lists things that Jesus taught by doing, drawing personal insight and application for internalizing what Christ modeled in accepting the unacceptable, loving his mentees as he has been loved by God, and learning to listen well.

This subsection is neatly drawn together by Chapter 9, *The Context of Wherever*, which ties the previous chapters together in an intriguing way, recognizing that "mentoring is about content, community, and context" (111). The point is explored further.

*"People who mentor intentionally will always want a curriculum. In the secular world, mentoring is built around a specific purpose...In the Christian world, there's no recognized content for mentoring beside the Bible itself.*

*Community is a new element to mentoring and it becomes a meaningful element when you mentor in a group environment.*

*But what about context? What is it? Why is it important?" (111).*

A traditional view of mentoring is most often characterized as mostly centered around the mentee's life, issues, opportunities and future. In addition, it is usually initiated by the mentee to meet a felt need of theirs, for guidance, wisdom, advice or help. But Jesus mentored differently. His mentoring was characterized by these things - He initiated the mentoring relationship; He set the agenda; He drew his mentees into His context...for His purposes; and His mentoring was done 'along the way' (112-114). Here is the point. "Life doesn't happen in church. Church can prepare us for life, and it can provide us shelter when the storms of life start beating. But life happens at home, at work, on vacation, in our neighborhoods. If we're going to share 'a piece of our map' with the next generation, for their benefit, then we must be out on the road with them, doing life together" (118).

You may recall hearing me express on occasion that the definition of mentoring in Immerse is categorically different than most commonly understood views of mentoring. The most noticeable point of differentiation is in the inclusion of academic evaluation and assessment, the administrative function of engaging student learning, and the unique methodology of mentoring as a team. While these components highlight what must be built into our mentoring to be effective as Immerse

mentors, this section of *Mentoring Like Jesus* reminds me that there are some pure elements of what is commonly understood as mentoring that must also be pursued and sustained. And it would appear that these aspects call us once again to the core priority of authentic relationship with our mentees.

Actually, these few chapters challenge me to my core as an Immerse mentor. As I consider the value of the investment that I am wanting to make in our student's lives regarding the truth's of scripture, the power of prayer, the modeling of active faith, in the context of life, I am challenged by the reality of how comfortable I am remaining distant and disconnected from my mentees. Considering how important I deem these core aspects to be, I am distressed by my shortcoming to invest fully in their development.

My hope for today is to ignite, or re-ignite, that mentoring dynamic of intentionally pursuing a personal connection with our mentees. I can tell you with certainty that one of the most anticipated and appreciated features of the Immerse program by the students as they enter is the opportunity for learning from their mentors. And I stand by the assertion that I have consistently 'sold' in our conversations and training together as mentors - you have something significant to give. You are the Colonel Sanders (mentor of *Wendy's* Dave Thomas), the Earl Woods (Tiger), the Dell Curries (Steph), the Peter Druckers (Jim Collins). The challenge that we must understand and undertake is 'how do I give what I have?'

Here lies the rub. It can't happen from the sidelines and it won't happen from a distance. Somehow we EACH need to find our balance, and nurture the relationship with our mentees that communicates that we are present, that we care, and that we are engaged. One of the statements that Campbell makes that I truly appreciate in this regard is, "Let your mentees see 'under the hood'" (89). His point is that truth gets transferred in an inexplicable way when our mentees have access to "what you are, how you think, and how you became the person you are" (89). I think for many of us, if we are making an honest evaluation of our mentoring performance, we are not investing to our potential. Our mentees aren't seeing 'under the hood'.

While Northview's Immerse program is no longer in its infancy, we are still in what I believe is a healthy process of maturing. What this means practically is that while there are growing pains, there is also opportunity to address some practical concerns. I think we would all acknowledge that mentored learning is one of, if not the key element, that elevates the potential of the Immerse learning experience. If I could expand our vision for Northview Immerse as we pursue Mentoring Mastery in our practice, and as we Mentor Mastery in our students, I would want to see our commitment to accessible relationship and interaction with our students find a greater place in our mentoring practice. Perhaps the clearest way to describe this is to highlight the contrast between 'walking with them in their educational journey' and finding time to fit our mentees into 'our journey'. There is a striking difference. One is distant and engages when convenient. The other is present and engages learning opportunities in a timely fashion.

So my appeal today is intended to draw us in beyond our educational responsibility - the evaluation and assessment of students in an academic program - and invite us to enter and engage the educational journey of these called and gifted future ministry leaders in a more pure form of mentoring. I can't help but wonder what kind of game changing impact would be achieved by

mentors committed to investing deeply in the transfer and elevation of truth at the core, the practice of prayer, teaching as we do ministry 'alongside' and 'along the way'.

I am asking the question, "How do we adjust our directional course to increase the regular investment of our mentors in the Northview Immerse vision?" Ultimately, I would love to see the core paradigm affected, where our students are able to experience what they have anticipated - at least a mentor, and ideally entire mentor teams, that are personally attentive to their life and development as ministry leaders. Is this possible? I don't know. Is it worth asking for? I think it is.

Obviously, I am not above making a seriously emotional appeal to challenge us to evaluate our investment relationally with our mentees. So I close with a statement that stopped me in my tracks.

*"We all do better when someone is watching. As you embrace this mentoring challenge, you'll realize that you're teaching by doing, that you're doing life all the time, and that your mentees are watching" (109).*