

Sermon on Choose the Right Mentor

Kwabena D. Akufo

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Text:

John 7:15-19 ¹⁵ The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" ¹⁶ Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. ¹⁸ He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. ¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

1 Introduction

1.1 Everyone is a teacher and a teacher is a mentor

My middle school friend Baba taught me by his actions to formally study for the secondary school common entrance examination. My secondary school friend, Zigah, taught me how to be non-conformant and break boarding school rules to attend concerts in town. One of my secondary school teachers taught me to learn from my mistakes by often saying, "We learn our principles from our experiences." One of my sixth form teachers taught me to focus on studying by often paraphrasing Jesus' statement and saying, "Seek ye first the academic kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you." All these people who came into my life taught me some things and influenced me in some way. Anyone can be a teacher to you and influence you. Anyone who teaches you serves as your mentor. He imparts knowledge, counsel, and instruction. A mentor is an adviser and teacher. He teaches his subject what to do. A good mentor, therefore, is a wise and trusted counselor and teacher.

1.2 Illustration of a bad mentor in the church

Kofi and Ama are both in a church. Kofi and Ama fight and Ama decides to leave the church. She then tells her friends Akosua and Adwoa to leave the church and they listen to her. They listen to her because she influences them in various aspects of their lives. Perhaps Ama got them jobs, Ama knows some famous people in town. So Akosua and Adwoa like being around

Ama and don't want to incur her wrath. Ama now is in a position to direct the lives of Akosua and Adwoa. She has become their mentor; she teaches them, counsels them, and directs their actions.

But is she a good mentor? The obvious answer is no. So, the question that arises is who is a good or right mentor and who is a bad or wrong mentor? You will suffer if you choose to associate with a wrong mentor and you will benefit greatly if you choose to associate with a good mentor.

1.3 The passage gives you a guide for choosing a good mentor

Our passage gives us some insight into answering this question so that you can choose the right mentor rather than follow someone blindly. Rabbis are teachers who influence their students' way of thinking and acting; that is, they are mentors. We learn from this passage that Jesus was a Rabbi who mentored the right principles of God and was threatened to death by bad mentors. Jesus urged the crowds to choose the right mentor. As the saying goes, "the majority is not always right" and so you should avoid automatically following the majority's mentors and follow the right mentor. Choose the truthful and right mentor to avoid disaster.

How would you know that someone is a right and truthful mentor?

2 The right mentor is inspired by and lives by God's Word

During the festival in Jerusalem there were various rabbis stationed in the temple courts teaching the Word of God. Of all the rabbis, verse 15 of our passage tells us that the Jews were amazed or overwhelmed with surprise at the type and level of teaching that Jesus was giving. They wondered how he was able to teach this way without any formal training at the feet of the various rabbinic professors. We might speculate from the previous context that some of the people were amazed in a negative way, questioning the credibility of his academic background. Other people were impressed because of the absence of academic background. Regardless of their motives, Jesus' answers to the audience reveal to us the qualities of a truthful teacher that make up a right mentor.

2.1 The good mentor's teaching is not his own ideas

In verse 16 Jesus told the crowd, "My teaching is not my own." Why did he make that statement? There were rabbinic schools of thought each with its own interpretation of Biblical commands. The Mishnah records these various interpretations. Jesus was telling the people that his teaching was not just another school of thought. He was not teaching from ideas he had formulated about what the Bible says. His teaching is the only right thinking about the Bible!

In walking your Christian life, you need to choose a mentor who will advise you using sound Biblical principles and not someone who will use the popular culture concepts and trends to show you what to do. For example, the Ghanaian community in America does not shun someone for leaving their American wife and marrying a Ghanaian because they view the Ghanaian wife as a better cultural match. This is a wrong thinking that some Christians not only permit but also promote. If you allow such a Christian to mentor you, he will be using his own ideas and not sound Biblical ideas. You must choose the right mentor to avoid mistakes.

2.2 The good mentor's teaching is based on the Word of God

Continuing in the verse 16 Jesus speaking of his teaching says, "It comes from him who sent me." In other words, his teaching is inspired by God and given by God. Jesus, as fully human, habitually waited upon God in prayer and God revealed his thoughts concerning man to him to convey to man. Jesus' teachings were solidly the direct words of God.

In the same way a good mentor is someone who waits on God in prayer; he is a prayerful person who studies the Bible frequently and practices what the Bible says. You must be careful not to be swindled by someone who comes across as prayerful with all kinds of mystic spirituality but lives contrary to the Bible. If your mentor uses his mysticism to gossip about others, dump him. If your mentor uses his mysticism to create dissensions, dump him. If your mentor uses his mysticism to create rebellion, dump him. If your mentor uses his mysticism to create factions, dump him. You must choose a spiritually mature mentor in order to receive Godly counsel.

2.3 The good mentor works to honor God and not himself

In verse 18, Jesus continued to explain to the people who a good mentor is when he said that a good mentor works for the honor of God, so that in everything God is praised. Whereas a bad mentor is looking to impress his student and get praise for himself. The bad mentor wants

you to know that he is the one who has enabled you to get a job, a wife/husband, a car. Once he gets you to feel that he got you a wife then he will begin to control your marriage or your situation. If you are not careful he will deceive you for his own selfish gain; that is, he will begin to defraud you.

You must choose a Godly mentor who points you away from himself and points you to God.

2.4 The good mentor is a truthful, genuine and good person

Because the good mentor is not seeking honor or praise for himself but is pointing you to God, he does not need to stretch the truth, exaggerate, or lie. As a result he is a truthful person, a genuine material. Because he is pointing you to God, he is mentoring you out of the goodness of his heart and looking out for your welfare and so he is a good person. On the other hand, the bad mentor, looking for some controlling benefit out of the relationship, will cheat and lie just to impress you and control you.

You must choose a truthful and genuine mentor to show you the good way of God.

3 The wrong mentor will character assassinate any right mentor in your life

In verse 19, Jesus accused the Jewish leaders of plotting to kill him, which act is murder and hence against the Mosaic law which they claim to uphold! They were plotting to kill him because his teaching was threatening the socio-economic status of the Jewish leaders who had solidified their status in society by twisting the Mosaic Law for their own benefit. If you come as a mentor into someone's life, who already has a bad mentor, the bad mentor will assassinate your character to get rid of you. They will fabricate all kinds of falsehood to malign your character and ruin your credibility in order to weaken or eliminate your mentorship. The bad mentor, therefore, practices character assassination to preserve his controlling influence on you. You must avoid such a person at all costs.

How then can you know and choose the right mentor?

4 If you seek to do God's will you will know the right mentor

In addition to using the criteria I have stated above, Jesus told the people in verse 17, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." That is, if you are someone who is seeking to do what is right by God, you have the zeal to know God's will concerning your life, and you desire to follow his will then you will intuitively know that someone who comes into your life is a good mentor or a bad mentor. For example, if you are thirsty for water and someone gives you Sprite in a glass pretending it is water you will know as soon as you take a sip of the drink. In the same way, if you purpose seriously to do God's will and you are looking for solid Godly mentoring you will know it when you get it. You will be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) who were looking to know and do God's will. Even though Paul dazzled them with his brilliant and spiritual teaching they tested it by the Word of God before yielding to his mentorship.

To guard against bad mentors masquerading as wolves in sheep clothing, I urge you to seek to know Christ and do God's will.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)

"Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess." (Hebrews 3:1)

"Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2)

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. (Matthew 6:33)

Surrender yourself completely to God and God will send you the right mentor.

5 Conclusion

Everyone is a teacher to someone and hence is a mentor to that person. Our passage gives you a guide for choosing a good mentor in your Christian walk. The right mentor is inspired by and lives by God's Word. The good mentor's teaching is not his own ideas, but based on the Word of God. The good mentor works to honor God and not himself. As a result he is a truthful, genuine and good person. The wrong mentor will character assassinate any right

mentor in your life. If you seek to do God's will you will know the right mentor when he comes along.