

Investing in Lives is a Key to Discipleship

Have you ever looked at your life and wondered how you have gotten where you are? As I look at my own pilgrimage of faith, it is easy for me to see that I am the product of many who have taken the time to help me understand what it means to become a disciple of Christ.

In the Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, he reminds the young disciple of the "sincere faith...which first dwelt in your grandmother, Lois and your mother, Eunice..." It was obviously Paul's intention to remind his young protégé of the investment that had been made in his life through the faithful witness and example of certain key members of his family.

Like Timothy, I am blessed to have been raised by those who showed me what it means to walk in godliness. My parents were obviously an early and important influence in my life as they instructed me in the words of our Lord as early as I can remember.

Also, both of my grandmothers made significant contributions to my spiritual upbringing. One of my grandmothers gave me a copy of "Tortured for Christ" by Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of Voice of the Martyrs. This powerful book reshaped my thinking about what it means to be a follower of Christ.

Besides my family, I was blessed to be discipled by my pastor, Charles Hendrickson, who not only taught me to share my faith, but taught me how to study God's word and introduced me to the writings of Leonard Ravenhill, Andrew Murray and E.M. Bounds.

Obviously, I was blessed by the encouragement and spiritual nurture of many people at Calvary Baptist Church of Sedalia who took an interest in challenging me to seek the Lord with all my heart. Various Sunday School teachers and other church leaders helped me to flesh out my faith through ministry and service.

Being nurtured in a community of faith enabled me to experience the truth of the Gospel as being something more than just an intellectual idea. Obviously one of the key components to spiritual growth is godly relationships. After all, it is our relationship with Christ that transforms our character. So why should it surprise us that God would use our relationships with other believers to help us develop and mature as believers? My relationship with my wife and daughters has taught me more about God's love and grace than words can express.

God continued to allow me to experience significant influences in my faith when I left home to attend Southwest Baptist University. Men such as Dan Cochran, Gordon Dutille, Larry Hodges, and Bernard Holmes were used of God to help me see God at work in the world around me. These men and others were more than simply my teachers; they fleshed out their faith in powerful and practical ways that enabled me to see how the Holy Spirit can transform the life of one who yields his or her life to His divine influence.

As I look back on my ministry experience I can easily see how indebted I am to many of those in local churches who have served alongside me over the past twenty plus years. There have been fellow ministers like Wayne Isgriggs, Don Laughlin and Don Combs who both encouraged me and challenged me to seek God with all that I am. Also, there were some incredible lay leaders whose lives of service and commitment showed me a level of sacrifice and service that our Lord deserves from all of His disciples.

All of these individuals as well as others whose books I have read, and whose lives have transformed my understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ are owed a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Every opportunity of ministry and influence that our Lord allows me is due in part to the investment that these men and women have made in my life.

The act of making disciples is not about the latest resource, the perfect program or process. Rather, it is about our relationship with Christ, and allowing that relationship with Him to mature. As we pray study and meditate on His word, God transforms our mind and will. He brings others into our lives to speak to us through both words and their lives.

As we begin to put the spiritual disciplines into practice and serve those around us, we begin to change into the man or woman that He desires.

While there may be some struggles and pitfalls along the way, our Creator continues to love and sustain us.

As long as we remain teachable, the Holy Spirit is able to perform a work in our lives that can only be described as miraculous.

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