

# Lesson 7 | July 14, 2024

## Examples of Christian Mentoring

**Study Text:** 1 Timothy 5:1–4; 2 Timothy 2:1–2; Titus 2:1–15

**Central Truth:** God uses a variety of relationships in churches to produce change in His people.

**Key Verse: Titus 2:7–8**

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity,

sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned (KJV).

You yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching can't be criticized (NLT).

### Learning Objectives

- Students will understand the mentoring relationship and its importance.
- Students will embrace a vision for the church as a family of believers learning and growing together.
- Students will care for widows and others in need and speak out against injustice.

## Introducing the Study

**Say:** Today we'll be looking at mentoring relationships, discussing why and how they are important. In his book, *The Mentor Leader*, former NFL coach Tony Dungy says mentoring involves “shaping, nurturing, empowering, and growing. It’s all about relationships, integrity, and perpetual learning. Success is measured in changed lives, strong character, and eternal values rather than in material gain, temporal achievement, or status.”<sup>1</sup> When we foster these kinds of relationships in the church, everyone in the family of God benefits.

<sup>1</sup> Tony Dungy, *The Mentor Leader* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2010), xviii.

### Opening Activity—Mentors and Mentees

**Ask.** *If you've ever been a mentor or a mentee, would you tell us about your experience?*

**Say:** Mentoring relationships can be valuable in many areas of life. In the church family, such relationships are intended to nurture Christian growth. Although the Bible doesn't include the word mentor, Paul both described and modeled mentoring in his pastoral letters. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Mentoring is a relatively new concept, although it is built on ancient principles and practices. It usually involves an older, more experienced individual guiding a younger person's growth, learning, and development. Old Testament examples include Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, and Mordecai and Esther. In the New Testament, Paul mentors Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, who then learn to mentor others.

## Part 1—Men Mentoring Men

### Men of Different Ages

1 Timothy 5:1; Titus 2:2,6

**Say:** It's clear that Paul took family relationships very seriously. His letters usually addressed the churches as "brothers and sisters," reinforcing the reality that all believers are adopted into God's family. As children of God, we have been grafted into a family unit that embodies love, acceptance, forgiveness, and growth. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul instructed Timothy not to let anyone look down on him because of his youth, but he was still instructed to show deference for older people—both men and women. He was a spiritual leader in the church, but that authority was not to be wielded without proper respect. Instead of rebuking them harshly, he should treat them as he would treat his parents (1 Timothy 5:1). Even when people need correction, the virtues of gentleness and kindness are still in order.

Paul gave Titus greater detail about the kinds of qualities that should be encouraged, particularly focusing on the older men who would set the example for the younger (Titus 2:2). They must be "sober" (NLT) or moderate with regard to alcohol or, more broadly, "exercise self-control." (The Greek word could mean either.) They must be worthy of respect, as both male and female deacons were to be (1 Timothy 3:8,11).

Older men must also live wisely. The Greek term points to being prudent, thoughtful, and self-controlled. They should have sound (wholesome and true) love, patience, and faith—a quality frequently emphasized in the pastoral letters.

In Titus 2:6, Paul spoke about younger men. They must also live "wisely" (NLT). The verb used here refers to being prudent with an emphasis on self-control: "be reasonable, sensible, serious, keep one's head."<sup>2</sup> It may be inferred that such young men will grow and become wise as they follow the example and guidance of older men and church leaders.

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 986.

### **Discuss**

? What habits and practices cement the loving environment in healthy families? How can the church nurture a strong, positive family environment?

? Why is it important for Christians to be able to “keep their head” and live wisely and prudently in this world? Who exemplifies that quality for you?

### **Resource Packet Item 1: A Great Mentor**

Distribute the worksheet and read the characteristics of a great mentor. Add your own ideas, and then discuss the questions together.

## **Embodying Wholesome Teaching**

Titus 2:1,7–8

**Say:** When our walk matches our talk, we can have a powerful witness—sharing the message not just with our words, but with our actions. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Framing the passage that provides guidelines for older and younger members of the church are Paul’s instructions for Titus himself. Titus was to “promote the kind of living that reflects wholesome teaching” (Titus 2:1, NLT). It is true that actions speak louder than words, but words are necessary too. These verses demand that words and actions line up, creating an integrated witness that will reinforce the truth of the message. Ministers of the gospel, along with all Christians called to bear witness for the Lord, cannot say one thing and do another.

This author was grateful to parents whose talk and walk did not diverge. What was said and done in gatherings of the church had to be consistent with life at home, in the neighborhood, and in the community throughout the week. Nothing else could have spoken so clearly to their children of the authenticity and truth of their faith. Even today, followers of Christ are called to bear that kind of witness.

When Titus set an example for the believers, his good works would spur them on to love and good deeds (verse 7). This collective integrity would shame those who opposed their teaching (verse 8). Ideally, in Paul’s consistently redemptive framework, this shame would lead to repentance and acceptance of the truth, and God’s good news would march ever forward, transforming lives and entire communities.

Imagine a world in which the wholesome, healthy, sound teaching of Scripture permeates every relationship and situation! That is why we pray, as Jesus taught us, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10, KJV). All of Paul’s exhortations, inspired by the Holy Spirit, nurture speech and actions aimed toward that ultimate purpose.

### **Discuss**

? Did you come to the Lord due to someone’s words or their actions? Which of these has more directly influenced your growth in the Lord?

? Do you model consistency? Do your coworkers see the same “you” that your fellow church members see?

## Part 2—Women Mentors and Widows

### Care for Widows

1 Timothy 5:2–4

**Say:** In 1 Timothy 5:2–4, Paul continued the analogy of the family with respect to Timothy’s treatment of older and younger women. Timothy was instructed to treat older women like he would his mother and younger women as he would his sister: “with all purity” (verse 2, NLT). (Share your highlights from the following text.)

This word *purity* highlights one of the several ways in which Timothy was to be an example to the believers (1 Timothy 4:12). It was also a quality particularly called for in this relationship; in context, Paul may have been specifically referring to “chastity.”

Widows were a group of women to whom Timothy was to give special care. Particularly those who are “widows indeed” (1 Timothy 5:3, KJV)—those who are truly alone and have “no one else to care for” them (NLT)—are to be honored, which includes caring for them materially.

In ancient times, widows were among the most needy members of society. Women had few options but to rely on men for support. The Law demonstrated the heart of God for widows: Israel was commanded to care for them (see Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29). James 1:27 describes caring for widows and orphans (another at-risk population) as “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father” (KJV).

Paul made clear that those who have the primary responsibility for a widow’s care are her children and grandchildren. This kind of respect and honor pleases God and is directly connected to the family members’ own godliness. (The word translated “nephews” in the King James Version, which occurs only once in the New Testament, refers to those born of or descended from someone. “Grandchildren” [NLT] is a better translation.)

Widows without such descendants to care for them are to be cared for by the church family. The command for Timothy and the church to “honor” them, using the same term as the fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), makes clear that these widows should receive the same treatment and care as biological parents are entitled to receive.

#### **Discuss**

? Share some ways you have seen families do a good job of caring for their aging relatives. What does this communicate to others?

? Our society has programs in place to help provide for widows, so what should be the church’s role in their care?

## Women of Different Ages

Titus 2:3–5

**Say:** Paul instructed Titus regarding the qualities he should encourage among older and younger women—just as he had earlier done concerning the men in the church. What he implied about the men’s relationships, he prescribed for the women’s: the older were to teach and the younger were to learn. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Titus was to teach the older women to exhibit God-honoring behavior. They were not to be slanderous, falsely accusing others. Paul had warned Timothy that slander would be common in the last days (2 Timothy 3:3). Nor were these older women to be heavy drinkers, as we have also seen in other lists for church leaders. “Instead, they should teach others what is good” (Titus 2:3, NLT).

Older women were to encourage and instruct their younger counterparts in good and wise living; younger women were to love their husbands and children. Rather than supporting any cultural assumption that women of this age must be married, there is some evidence that false teaching in the first century was subverting God-given marital and childbearing roles (1 Timothy 4:3; 5:14), so the older women’s good teaching and faithful example was especially critical. The admonition for the younger women to “live wisely” (Titus 2:5, NLT) is among the most frequent in the pastoral letters.

Operating the household was a primary responsibility of women in that culture (see 1 Timothy 5:14). Older women were encouraged to teach younger women “to work in their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands” (Titus 2:5, NLT). The function of a Christian household hinges on respect, flowing from complete relational transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit. The testimony of such a household keeps the gospel from being disparaged and contributes to a good reputation and witness before outsiders (see 1 Timothy 3:7; 5:14).

### Resource Packet Item 2: The Gospel Unhindered

Distribute the worksheet and allow a few minutes for students to read and process the information. Then discuss the questions together.

#### **Discuss**

? How have cultural changes affected the application of Paul’s instructions for women to be “keepers at home”?

? In what ways might you be able to learn from people farther along in their walk with Christ?

## Part 3—Encourage Good and Pure Behavior

### This Evil World

Titus 2:9–12

**Say:** We live in a world filled with evil prejudice, but we can rise above injustice through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Paul’s time, slavery was a demeaning reality, although it wasn’t racially based. In this portion of his letter to Titus, Paul offered guidance for how Christian slaves should “live in this evil world” (Titus 2:12, NLT). Titus could be instrumental in mentoring people for whom physical freedom was not an option. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Christian slaves were to be submissive (the same term used regarding young wives in Titus 2:5), working to please their masters. They were not to talk back or steal but demonstrate goodness and trustworthiness. Why? So they would “make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way” (verse 10, NLT). Believing slaves could serve as examples and mentors to others.

The grace of God brings salvation to all who accept Christ. While that position will last throughout eternity, all earthly roles are temporary. Paul encouraged those trapped in degrading power structures to keep their eyes fixed on eternal things. “Are you a slave? Don’t let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ” (1 Corinthians 7:21–22, NLT).

It is not that unjust systems like slavery are insignificant or shouldn’t be opposed! Throughout Scripture, God acted—and commanded His people to act—on behalf of the oppressed. Christian voices, like Paul’s, must be at the leading edge of opposition to injustice in every form and in every era.

The world is held captive to Satan, but in Christ we are free. Our mission is to embody the good news by turning away from sin and living “in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God” (Titus 2:12, NLT). Instead of being consumed with our own rights and entitlements, Paul would have us focus on seeing God liberate others through the salvation of their souls.

### ***Discuss***

? What cultural practices or life circumstances can sometimes distract us from accomplishing God’s work in our communities?

? What should be the role of Christians in responding to injustice in our world?

### **Resource Packet Item 3: You’re the Mentor**

Distribute the case studies and divide the class into small groups. Assign one case study to each group to discuss. After a few minutes, ask them to share their thoughts with the class, and then discuss the best course of action.

## **Looking Forward with Hope**

Titus 2:13–15



**Say:** What sustains followers of Christ as they struggle to be a light in this dark world? “Looking for that blessed hope” (Titus 2:13, KJV)! This unshakable hope is a key quality to pass on to those in our sphere of influence. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Our blessed hope is the great future awaiting us when Jesus Christ returns in glory. If Peter, James, and John were in awe at the transfiguration of Jesus, imagine the splendor of His coming on the clouds with heavenly hosts of angels.

Strengthened with this future hope and living presently in Christ’s victorious, liberating power, His followers grow as He purifies us. We are “a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14, KJV). It’s interesting how words change over time! Today we might wonder, “Why does God want us to be odd, strange people?” But in 1611 (when the King James Version was created), the word peculiar carried a meaning closer to the original Greek word, which means “chosen” or “special.” It is the same word used in the Greek translation of Exodus 19:5, where God says, “You will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth” (NLT).

As Jesus’ very own people, we must be “totally committed to doing good deeds” (Titus 2:14, NLT). Jesus commanded us to be “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14–16). When the world sees our good deeds, they will start to understand who our Father is and will praise and glorify Him. Titus was instructed to “teach these things and encourage the believers to do them” (Titus 2:15, NLT). Paul reminded Titus of his calling and responsibility to lead, exhort, and correct the people under his care.

### **Discuss**

? Given the current state of this world, what encouragement do you find in these verses? What do you think it will be like to live in the fully realized kingdom of God?

? According to verse 14, what has Jesus done for us, and what were His purposes? How does your life reflect these truths?

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** Paul’s friends and coworkers have been our mentoring companions the past few weeks. Let’s continue that relationship for years to come, returning to these texts again and again and asking the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to new people we can reach and new ways He can use us. May we fan into flame the gifts God has given us. May we courageously live for Jesus, truly living as God’s special people in this present age.

## **Living It Out**

### **Ministry in Action**

- Plan a tangible way to help a widow or other potentially vulnerable person in your neighborhood or church family.
- Ask God to open doors that will place you in a mentoring relationship in your church, either as a mentor or a mentee.

- Prayerfully evaluate your stance on societal injustices, inviting the Holy Spirit's guidance.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

Monday:

Mentoring through Tragic Seasons.  
Ruth 1:14–22

Tuesday:

Godly Friends Mirror the Redeemer.  
Job 19:19–27

Wednesday:

The Spirit Guides All Ages.  
Joel 2:21–29

Thursday:

Women Participate in Christ's Work.  
Luke 7:44 through 8:3

Friday:

Allow Christ to Transform Your Group.  
Acts 16:5–15

Saturday:

Be Encouraged by Biblical Examples.  
Hebrews 11:32 through 12:2