

Living a Fulfilling Life

There's a shortage of people today in the church who are willing to pass on the things they have learned to the next generation. What does your mantle look like?

I'm convinced that **God wants each of us to be involved in training relationships—both to teach and to learn---for our entire life.**

Companies in America have learned the importance of training employees and one good example that I see is Home Depot. Home Depot trains their employees and in fact, they even offer training to their customers—How many of you have shopped at Home Depot? ---As you leave they advertise the How to clinics--How many of you have attended a How To Clinic at Home Depot?

Home Depot knows that if they can train their customers on how to do certain home improvement projects, they will reap the benefits in sales. Several years back I got an advertisement in the mail from Home Depot that interested me. My birthday was approaching and I had let Stephanie know that I'd like to get a grill for my birthday. The ad had a title that was music to my ears "Free Grill Assembly". You see I'm not the best do-it-your-selfer and I really wasn't interested in getting training on assembling a grill. I made my way to Home Depot to pick out my pre-assembled grill—and sure-enough—they had the grill I was looking for assembled and ready to wheel-out of the store. I was thinking to myself—Barry you sure are smart—you saved a couple of hours putting it together and the assembly was free. Things were going great until I got to our van---and opened the sliding door and you guessed it—the grill wouldn't fit assembled in the car. For about 20 minutes I tried various combinations of angles, doors, etc. to get the grill as a whole in the van. Several women passed by the van—pointing and laughing at my sad, futile attempts. After several tries, I managed to get the grill in the van with a few minor adjustments to the pre-assembly---so much for "Free grill assembly"---

My father-in-law is the king of the do-it-yourselfers. Half his basement is a workshop complete with all kinds of tools I don't even know the name of. I think one of his objectives in life is to teach me how to do some home improvement projects that go beyond changing a light bulb. A few years back Stephanie and I rented a house in Alabama that was in need of several home improvement projects before we moved in. My father-in-law came down for 2 weeks and helped me get the house ready before we moved in. The rental was an older large 5 bedroom house that had old hardwood floors throughout the house. The floors were in good shape.---they just needed to be waxed. Of the list of projects on the house—that was the one I chose to add to my list.

I went to an equipment rental store to get a buffer. I'm amazed at what they let you walk out of the store with from an equipment rental place. U-haul will let me rent a 24' truck without evening checking me out on the thing—like I know what to do with a 24' truck. Anyway I talked to an employee at the equipment rental place and he said he knew

exactly what I needed. An 18” buffer with pads and wax. I rented it and walked out of the store without asking any questions—after all how hard could it be to run a buffer? I drove around the side of the rental place to load the equipment and when I saw the machine—I knew I should have asked questions. It was an industrial buffer—about 100lbs.

I got it back to the house and put a buffer pad on the machine and took some wax and prepared the floor for the buffer. The wax can at least had instructions on how to prepare the floor.

Finish story

I learned from him and he learned from me. That’s the way God intended for our relationships in the church to be... the problem is..too few people do it.....

The Bible is full of examples of people who were in mentoring relationships.

Moses and Joshua

Elijah and Elisha

Naomi and Ruth

Jesus and the 12

Paul and Timothy

I could have picked from any of these examples in Scripture, but today, I’d like to look at the story of Elijah and Elisha. The reason I’ve picked these guys is because I’ve often heard when I discuss the issue of mentoring—I’m too imperfect –I make too many mistakes to mentor someone. Elijah had his share of failures, but his mantle was passed to Elisha and God was able to continue the work after Elijah was gone. The ministry of Elijah and Elisha covers several chapters in the Old Testament and I won’t be able to read the entire account for you today, but for follow up Elijah’s ministry begins in 1 Kings 17 and runs through 2 Kings 2. If you have your Bible today go ahead and open to these chapters and as you have a moment glance through the story as it unfolds. I need to give a little background to the story before we talk about the transition of ministry from Elijah to Elisha.

Elijah was commissioned by God to be a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Ahab and his wife Jezebel were in power in the Northern Kingdom and they were teaching the people to follow after false gods. Jezebel introduced the god of Baal to the people of Israel and she forced her religious beliefs on the people through killing almost all the prophets of God and installing 100s of prophets of Baal to live in the palace and worship there. You’ll have to excuse the way I say Baal today—for those of you Hebrew scholars –it should be Ba-al –but for a young preacher from Alabama Baal’s the way I was taught to say it---

The god of Baal was known as the god of fertility and of the rain clouds and thus worship of him involved all types of sexual acts and drunkenness that are in direct contradiction to God. God sent Elijah with a message of judgment...

No rain for the next few years until God gives the word through Elijah---

From here, Elijah is sent by God into hiding for 3 years—during which time there was no rain.

After 3 years, God sends Elijah back to talk with Ahab again---there still is no repentance in Israel even though even the king and his herds and flocks are desperately searching for water due to the drought from no rain.

Elijah issues a challenge to Ahab to meet on Mount Carmel to see whose God is truly god—and any of you who have a church background could probably tell the story from here. I will summarize the events because it sets the backdrop for what happens next in Elijah's life.

450 prophets of Baal assembled to meet the challenge that God had given Elijah. The prophets of Baal were given first chance to allow Baal to perform the supernatural act that would determine who the true God was. The true god would be able to burn up the sacrifice of a bull on an altar without the assistance of a prophet. The prophets of Baal called out to their god all morning with no success. Elijah started mocking them and telling them to shout louder ---asking if Baal was too busy or asleep.

By afternoon the prophets of Baal started ecstatically shouting and cutting themselves with the hope that Baal would send fire.

Finally, Elijah let them know it was his turn. He had assistants prepare the bull and the altar and even added water all over and around it—and then he prayed to God and fire came and burned up everything ---the altar water and everything---God proved himself to be the only true God.

Shortly after Elijah prayed and rain came.

This was a pivotal time in the history of Israel. The people had seen the true God act and were faced with a decision to repent and turn back to God. Elijah was in a key position to lead the change—but.....Jezebel had other ideas...

Jezebel was not happy with the outcome on Mt Carmel—she sent a messenger to Elijah letting him know she would kill him in less than 24 hours. Elijah---the man who God used for supernatural events---runs in fear....

---If Jezebel wanted him dead...she could have sent the army and killed him on the spot...Jezebel in her cunningness was able to stop the show of support for God by removing the principle leader and discrediting him in the process.

Elijah didn't just go a few miles away—after 40 days of travel he was a good 200 miles away from the action. Elijah was ready to give up and die...

God uses this moment to teach Elijah a lesson.
Hold with me while we read the main text for the message today.
In verse 9 of I Kings 19 it says:

And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁰He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

Elijah was having a pity party
He was rash in running from Jezebel—God didn’t tell him to run
He was afraid
He was self-absorbed----I’m the only one left....
But God uses the incident to refine him...

¹¹The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹²After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Elijah the fiery prophet probably felt certain that God would display himself in a supernatural way---but he chose a whisper

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

¹⁴He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

Elijah gives the same answer as before ---He still hadn’t figured out that that was the wrong answer.
God doesn’t even stop to argue his sad case.

¹⁵The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Elijah was given a mandate to anoint a king of Israel’s enemy, to anoint a new king in Israel and to anoint Elisha as his successor. Notice that God doesn’t let Elijah get away with his exaggeration of being the only one left..

Elijah had already been given first hand knowledge of 100 prophets of God that were still alive in Israel just before Mt Carmel.

¹⁹So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. ²⁰Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother good-by,” he said, “and then I will come with you.”

“Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?”

²¹So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.

(NIV)

Elisha knew the cloak was a sign that Elijah was asking him to come and apprentice as a prophet. He left everything he had and burned it –so that there was no doubt he wouldn’t be going back. Eventually, Elisha succeeded Elijah and God gave him a double portion of Elijah’s mantle. Many of you have never read this story in the Bible---I invite you to sign-up for the Old Testament group starting later this month---you’ll get to learn some really neat stuff from the Old Testament in that group.

This Biblical story raises some interesting issues as I consider mentorship in the world we live in today—As I said earlier---too few people are willing to pass on the things they have learned from God to the next generation.

I’d like to work through the issue of mantles with a series of questions today that I think will be helpful.

- **Why pass on my mantle?**

The simple answer to this is that we are only one generation away from Christianless society. If we all stopped today training and reaching the next generation, chaos and ungodliness would be rampant even more in our society

than it is today. God ordained us to train up disciples and teach them to follow Christ's teaching---To not pass it on is an act of selfishness and a blatant disregard for God's purposes and plans for our life.

Elijah was too willing to throw in the towel and go off somewhere to pout and even die because of the struggles he was facing. God had other plans for Elijah and He gave him a second chance to pass on his mantle and mentor Elijah.

- **Why look to other mantles?**

I'd like to take this question and begin the answer with a personal story. A few weeks ago, I decided to take up the sport of racquetball as a way to get a little better into shape. Pastor Ryan and Jim graciously agreed to play some games with me and I really had a fun time—not much of a workout—but a fun time. I was feeling pretty good about my playing after playing them and I had heard Tony Williams talk several times about playing up at the Pentagon—so I contacted him and we set up a date to go and play. I was outclassed on every point Tony destroyed me—but I enjoyed being pressed to the limit of my ability. Tony must have been serving at about 150 miles an hour—I just watched some of the serves and laughed. Shortly after being toasted by Tony, I heard that Bryan Amason was a racquetball player. We set up a time to play and once again I was destroyed—I only scored 3 or 4 points at the most each game and we played for 2 hours. He even spotted me 10 points and I lost 15 to 12. I played each of these guys a few times over the last couple of weeks and they don't know it yet, but I'm improving a little each time—because I'm watching. I'm learning about angles, positions, strategy, and technique. They are passing on knowledge and expertise that I could have learned on my own, but never at the rate or consistency as with them. They are leading me through the short cuts and pitfalls that they have learned over the years. Finding a mentor who can do that for you in your Spiritual walk will accelerate your growth in ways you never dreamed were possible. Some time this year, I'll give you an update after I beat Tony and Bryan.

Men, if you haven't started in a warrior group with our men's ministry—now's a great time to start connecting with other men and finding mentors in various areas of your life and your walk with God. Women, start looking to the women's meetings and studies and you'll find women who can serve as mentors and guides.

Elisha probably felt he had a calling from God, but he received OJT when Elijah was there. By the time Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind, Elisha was mature and prepared as a prophet and he was ready to continue God's words of prophecy with miraculous signs and wonders.

- **Who gets my mantle?**

A few weeks ago the pastors of Horizons were out to lunch and Rich and Ryan mentioned a show called The Apprentice that they had watched. The show is another reality based series where a group of business people are competing against each other to become a vp in one of Donald Trumps companies—At the end of each show he has what appears to be a pleasure for him of saying you're fired to one contestant—sending them home for good. I've yet to see the show in its entirety but I have seen the last five minutes of 3 shows where the board room scene and the firing take place----You're fired.. I'm happy to say that mantles from God are not handled in the same way. Elijah was instructed by God about who he was to anoint as his successor. I'll let you in on a little secret about who you should be looking to pass on a mantle to. If you have children—start with them—If you're a parent it's your God given responsibility to train and equip your children. Pastor Ryan and Pastor Jim and all the volunteers who work in our youth and children's departments are doing a great job, but they're here to assist you parents in training your children---not to take over the training. After you have identified family, start looking to people you have relationship with in the church, at work, and in your community.

Here's a truth that can't be stated more strongly at this point:

Impartation-you can't mentor beyond where you've been

In order to remain a mentor and guide to those you are around, you must always continue to learn and grow and mature in Christ

- **Whose mantle am I receiving from?**

Check your schedule and your free time and you'll know...The reality is that mentoring is a lost art to most Americans. We pride ourselves on personal choice and freedom to choose our own path. What usually happens to a person is that they develop a "mantle" that is a hodge podge of secular culture, personal experience, and a skewed world view like materialism or hedonism.

If you're blessed in this area, you may have a few mentors in your life who are a source of wisdom and stability that you rely on a regular basis.

Elisha obviously knew who Elijah was when he came and placed his mantle on him. He was ready to leave a comfortable life of success because he understood the call that God had on his life.

- **How do I give/receive a mantle?**

- **Be Teachable**—This implies 2 ways of looking at mentoring. The first is that you must be able to Teach--Do something in your life for God---be able to teach---The second is that you must be hungry and willing to learn. A few years ago when Garrison was 3, I tried to start teaching him a few

things about the trumpet. I had an older trumpet that I had given him and he and I would sit and play from time to time together just for fun. One day I decided to try to teach him some fingerings for notes—It didn't go too well—before I could even finish explaining a concept, Garrison would say “I know dad I know...” —you can't learn unless you are willing to admit lack in an area.

- **Be Responsible**---If you are mentoring you must lead above reproach--- you can't sabotage your leadership with gray areas---The Bible says a student becomes like his teacher---You can't skirt issues with alcohol, drugs, and ungodly entertainment as a mentor. You have to recognize the calling that God has given you as a mentor.

89 million people watched the superbowl last Sunday. Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake will be remembered in their career now for there indecent stunt at halftime. A media research group estimates that 1 in 5 of 2 to 11 year olds in the US were watching the halftime show when the incident occurred.

If that wasn't bad enough---Tivo set a personal record for people rewinding and playing the clip over and over again. It's the single most watched clip in the history of TIVO.

If you're the protégé, it's imperative that you are responsible as well in keeping your life above reproach.

- **Be Available**—

When I was half-way through my Doctorate, I asked on of my mentors to join my research group to assist me in completing my project. It was painful for me that he declined because he felt he didn't have the time to oversee my project in the way he would like. I appreciated the fact that he didn't lead me on and do a half-hearted job with me. If you are a mentor and you agree to be available to someone---be available.

In the same way, if you are seeking a mentor and the opportunity arises, be available.

Elisha left it all and was ready to go when God opened the door.

- **Be Intentional**—it doesn't happen automatically—Every year or so I travel to Tulsa to meet with 2 mentors of mine who have really proved to be a resource for me though various ministry and life struggles that I have faced. I purposely schedule the trip and pay my way out there just to take these guys to lunch and pick there brains and have them speak into my life. They're some extremely busy men, but because I intentionally ask they are willing to make time to meet.

Elisha intentionally stayed with Elijah until he was taken up in a whirlwind.

If you're a mentor, be intentional in leading your protégé through experiences and conversations that will shape them and cause them to grow.

- **Be Natural**

A mentoring relationship will never grow and develop if the people involved are fake or plastic. Real life brings real emotions and issues to the table. Covering over issues and hiding feelings will limit the effectiveness of the relationship.

Review TRAIN

I started today with a statement that there was a shortage of people who were willing to pass on the things they had learned to the next generation---I know as we've talked through this passage with Elijah and Elisha and as you've heard some of my stories that you've had some time to reflect on your own life situation.

Many of you are looking for a mentor—some are recognizing a need to be a mentor. I want to pray with you along with our prayer counselors if you were moved by anything that was said today. Just as God ordained the relationship of Elijah and Elisha—he will do it for you.

When my father passed away, he didn't leave my family with financial wealth---but he left something that I will treasure and pass on with the Lord's help to others including my children. A consistent life of serving God and making a difference for God's kingdom.

I pray that God puts a desire deep in your heart to be a father or mother, a friend, a co-worker who does the same with the mantle God has given you.