



Jesus' Mentoring Style

Rick Lewis, in his book entitled, "Mentoring Matters: Building Strong Christian Leaders, Avoiding Burnout, Reaching the Finishing Line"¹ explores the way that Jesus trained his disciples during his ministry here on earth. He did not train his disciples in an academic or classroom setting, but rather used the Jewish rabbinical system which relies primarily on conversations, questions and answers, observation, and imitation.

Consider, for a moment, some of the ways that Jesus invested in the lives of his disciples:

- **He modeled** for his disciples healthy patterns of self-care through activity and rest, prayer and solitude, servant leadership, and working and waiting.
- **He debriefed** his disciples after key experiences, helping them reflect on what they learned. He helped his disciples cycle through instruction, action, and reflection.
- **He offered alternative perspectives** by challenging the disciples' assumptions and the religious status quo of the day.
- **He listened** to his disciples and picked up on cues about their heart motivations by "reading between the lines".
- **He asked questions** to draw out curiosity and stimulate thinking.
- **He challenged** the disciples through correction, confrontation, and even rebuking.
- **He affirmed and encouraged** them when they did well and offered alternate courses of action when the disciples failed.
- **He quoted Scripture** to help the disciples understand their mission and challenge human tradition.

¹ Lewis, Rick (2009) *Mentoring Matters: Building Strong Christian Leaders, Avoiding Burnout, Reaching the Finishing Line*. Monarch Books, Oxford, England.

- **He adapted his approach** to the needs and personalities of different disciples. To Peter, a man of action, Jesus called him out of the boat to walk on the water. To Thomas, a man who doubted, Jesus went out of his way to address his doubts. To Matthew, a man who left a life of financial exploitation as a tax collector, Jesus assured him of his love by attending a party held by former tax collectors.
- **He was available and vulnerable** with his disciples. He allowed himself to be deeply known by his disciples. He did not approach his disciples as a superior, but ate and drank with them and lived at their level. He allowed his disciples to see him when he was teaching and preaching, but also when he was tired or frustrated or angry or distressed. He spent a great deal of time with them doing ordinary activities and many of his teachings sprang from the everyday experiences of life, like fishing, looking for a lost coin, or eating.
- **Jesus demonstrated** how to teach, handle large crowds, heal the sick, care for the emotionally distraught, and care for himself spiritually and emotionally.
- **He gave access to special experiences** such as seeing the transfiguration and being present with Jesus in his final hours in Gethsemane.

Take a few minutes to think about how you interact with the people you are mentoring or influencing. Are there components of Jesus' mentoring style that you would like to use more? You may even want to discuss the various components of Jesus' mentoring style with your mentee and ask what would be most helpful for him/her.