

“Mentoring Leadership Character”
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Jesus challenges us in Luke 6:40, “When a student is fully trained he will become like his teacher,” (Or his school president, or his seminary professor, or his pastor!) Ministry is always incarnated and enfleshed. Ministry must be lived out!

What is it about ourselves that we want our community-our students and faculty, or our parishioners-to catch from us? We want our people to catch from us a servant spirit, committed to *motivating, equipping and enabling others to also serve in Jesus’ name.*

What we are confronted with is the need to communicate a lifestyle within the community that is distinctly Christian-and self-giving at the core. But how do you communicate a lifestyle? How do you teach a lifestyle?

Whatever else it means, it demands taking seriously the principle of imitation. Herbert Mayer, in his book, *Pastoral Care, Its Roots and Renewal*, reminds us that this principle was a key in Christian leadership for eighteen centuries. We must recapture this principle if we take seriously the biblical mandate to be mentors and examples to believers. Recall the words of the Apostle Paul:

- Follow me as I follow Christ.
- You ought to follow my example.
- Put into practice what you have learned, received or heard from me or seen in me.
- We did this in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.

Paul gave these instructions with humility to the Christians under his care. WE must do the same for those for whom we are responsible.

The broad principle of imitation must possess us if we are to effectively transfer our vision, passion, and obsession within Christian fellowship. The principle is developed and made specific in Ephesians 4:25-32. The passage outlines a mentoring leadership lifestyle within the Christian community.

Ephesians, Chapter four begins with the challenge to walk worthy of our calling as Christians. The characteristics of the person “walking worthy” follow the challenge. We are instructed to be gentle, humble patient, and supportive of each other. In so living, we will “maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (v.3).

But, as Christian leaders, how do we express gentleness, humbleness, patience, and supportiveness? The key leadership principle captivating the leader in community is found in Ephesians 4:15- “speak the truth in love,” and this critical concept is fleshed out in verses 25-32.

Paul, in these verses, is not so much talking about administrative techniques, but Christian attitudes underlying our actions and activities within the community. We are co-laborers together in the body of Christ (v.25). We relate with others in the fellowship out of an “I-Thou” frame of reference. The people with whom we work are God’s own creation.

Because of this fundamental Christian conviction, we can *be honest...*with the believers; *immediate...*in dealing with conflict among us; *upbuilding...*with our words; and *forgiving*, even when others do not forgive us.

We express, therefore, gentleness, humbleness, patience, and supportiveness through words and deeds that consistently communicate these leadership character imperatives:

I love you, I accept you, I respect you, I need you, I trust you, I serve you, I forgive you, and I accept your forgiveness.

Words and deeds done by others to us must never be permitted to create bitterness and resentment within us.

An obsession for community is not an option for the mentoring leader. It is an imperative, even in conflictual situations. Because relationships are so important to us, we “care enough to confront” our brother or sister in Christ. We are too much about the relationship to ignore destructive behavior. We speak the truth in love, and we care enough to allow our brother or sister in Christ to speak truthfully to us.

Paul’s instructions are not psychological in nature; they are deeply theological. The Spirit of God is deeply concerned with the speech of His people (Eph. 4:30a).

These instructions may not be found in the latest secular textbook on leadership. They are foundational for servant leaders who take seriously the principle of imitation, and who want their faith community to catch from them a servant spirit.