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Part 2

**Mentoring by
Encouragement:
Serving God
or Mammon**

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**Series: Possessing the Land:
The Process of Mentoring**

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Part 2

Mentoring by Encouragement: Serving God or Mammon

Paul said it to Timothy, and he made it clear. The believer who was attempting to pour his life into others needed to achieve a balance; he or she was to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with longsuffering and doctrine.” There was a three-pronged approach to changing a life. Correction, redirection, and encouragement, used in balance, would keep the heart open, the mind challenged, and the emotions balanced, and it must be done by patient instruction. The imperfections or blind spots must not go unnoticed, but the negatives must be turned to positives and not just left as debris, uncollected by the side of the road. And in order to “build up” or “encourage” the believer, his or her mentor needed to understand where the “discouragement” or the negatives were coming from, and why.

In our last study, we began looking at the first of those sources of discouragement or depression. It was the roadblock of rejection, that oft’ used weapon in Satan’s arsenal of fiery darts that takes the heart of a man or woman and simply devastates it by making that person feel unloved, unwanted, or unworthy. He uses parents, children, employees, friends, strangers, and virtually anyone or anything to challenge what are often already fragile self-concepts until rejection blossoms into anger, bitterness, or despair. When that happens, the failure to be accepted often leaves a void in the life that simply must be filled.

It is at the door of such a heart that Jesus so often knocks. It is into that void that God so often moves. And the Psalmist painted a graphic photograph of the depth of that despair and the victory that God would have come out of it. He said:

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD
will take me up.

Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path,
because of mine enemies. (Psalm 27:10,11)

The Psalmist describes the most heart-breaking experience a human being can have: that of being forsaken or abandoned by

one's own parents. Then he takes that earth-shattering, grievous moment and paints the most encouraging picture imaginable. Just at that moment of despair, when life doesn't even seem worth living, the Lord comes, and "takes us up". God Himself, the perfect Father, reaches down into that world of emptiness and fills it with Himself. He reaches down personally and replaces the lostness of that moment with the very presence of the Creator God and He takes the place of that one who has taken his or her love from us, until what could have been the worst experience of our lives becomes the very door that opens our heart to real love; unconditional love, undying love, perfect love: the love of God.

The curse becomes a blessing. What Satan meant for evil, God means for good. An empty life is filled with God; a hopelessness is transformed by grace into a confident expectancy undergirded by the unchanging promise that He will never leave us or forsake us. Not only has rejection been turned into acceptance, it is eternal acceptance. No longer need we fear, at some moment, that the one we want so to love us will change his or her mind, and we will find ourselves alone, without comfort. No longer. Now we know that through the endless ages of eternity, as well as through the vistas of time, we have a Father who will always be there. He is omnipresent. Not only does He plan to never leave us, He cannot ever leave us and still be God. So that which could have destroyed us has become the greatest tool of all in the hands of a God who takes "the foolish things of this world" and uses them "to confound the wise" (I Corinthians 1:27,28).

Our first key, then, to encouraging those we mentor or those we parent is the key of turning rejection into acceptance; abandonment into confident hope. And it is a given when we have given our hearts to Christ. Rejection is a horrible experience. God wants to turn it into something that brings glory to His name. What a mentoring opportunity it can become.

The second arena in which Satan casts his fiery darts towards the believer is in the area of this world's goods. We so often base our success or our self-worth or even our value to God on how successful we are in accumulating this world's goods, or how successful we are at making money. Even Christian ministries have been known to create new measuring sticks of faith: e.g. whether or not you can believe God to make you "prosperous and successful". And so those we mentor: our children, our disciples, and those we teach, need to understand through the process

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of both encouragement and rebuke that God has a different perspective of success and failure. That is because He has a different objective in life for His children. God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

That means that whenever a priority or a decision is involved, this world gives way to the next, the physical yields to the spiritual, and the responsibility for the outcome rests solely in the hands of a sovereign God. As the Psalmist said:

For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.

But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. (Psalm 75:6,7)

However, you and I do have these basic responsibilities and must understand certain principles.

- 1- We are to labor diligently, as unto the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)
- 2- We are to make every effort to provide for our families. (I Timothy 5:8)
- 3- God, however, has promised us only two basic things. (I Timothy 6:6-8)
- 4- We are not to compare our lot in life or our income with another's. (Matthew 20:1-16) (II Corinthians 10:12)
- 5- We must understand the perils that accompany riches. (I Timothy 6:9-12)

Having come to those conclusions, we move into the seemingly perilous subject of financial success and the magnetic pull of "things" that so competes with the leading of the Holy Spirit where a commitment to eternal or spiritual success is involved. Being financially successful is not a sin. It is a God-given blessing (as Psalm 75 just told us) which God has the right both to give and to take away (Job 1:21) when it is in our best interest, spiritually. I have been in awe watching special people God has gifted and disciplined to be good stewards and then, filled with compassion and a sense of eternity, give and give and give and give. It isn't the money we have that's the issue; it's whether or not the money has us.

The greatest keys to discipling in this matter are two-fold. The first is the matter of priorities. The second is the matter of

pressure. Where priorities are concerned, the issue isn't how much we have, it's how we use what we have. In the matter of pressure, it boils down to whether or not we judge ourselves and our lot in life by what others have or do, rather than being thankful for our own place in God's plan, and our own place in the world's order of things.

Each of the solutions to discouragement are designed to reveal certain aspects of God's character. Rejection releases the love of God and the mercy of God. Financial stress and discouragement over financial pressure offers a chance for God to reveal His sovereignty and His grace. His sovereignty expresses His total control over the affairs of man, while His grace reveals that while what we deserve is nothing, God, as a sovereign ruler, so loves us that He enables us supernaturally to have what, according to His plan for our lives is best, anything and everything we need.

There are several principles clearly revealed in Scripture that ought to help us help those we mentor to overcome the conflict over priorities as well as the pressures of conformity that create depression and discouragement and despair. For man it includes the issue of identity, because men, since Cain and Abel, have identified their worth and their place in society by what they do, and by how what they do is viewed by society, rather than by who they are in the eyes of God.

For a woman, on the other hand, the issue is one of security, because her identity is often in her husband; and in the flesh, woman's natural tendency is to create that identity based on what her husband does or doesn't provide. Often her home reflects who she is, so if her husband is not able to provide a home that competes with "Sister So and So's", she feels insecure and unsuccessful. It is a lie straight from the pit, but Satan sells it well. So well-meaning believers, who seem to be growing in the Lord, find themselves moving in two directions at once. Spiritually, they are trying to put God first, but the pressures and the priorities of the world are crying out and they are struggling with how to maintain their identity in Christ and still be acceptable in the world. The truth is that God's ways are so much higher than man's ways, that trying to merge the two is the primary source of the problem. At some point, every believer, man and woman, has to make some basic choices, and then, when temptations come to conform to the world, they have to stand by those choices.

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Here are some basic biblical principles every mentor needs to remember as he or she pours his or her life into someone else:

1- The process of judging others and thus yourself on the basis of economic success or failure is false in God's eyes. James, chapter 2 tells us:

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?
(James 2:1-4)

The Holy Spirit is condemning the practice of believers making judgments based on someone's apparent worldly success. He draws an extreme picture to get our attention. He says: If someone comes into your church and it is obvious that they have "made it big", whatever you do, don't give them favored treatment. Don't offer them favored positions; don't place them on boards or committees or give them extra recognition. That's wrong. That's not how God judges success. He goes on to say that if someone comes into your fellowship in tattered clothes, an obvious welfare case, without any worldly credentials at all, you don't turn the other way or try to place him or her in the back where they won't be noticed or won't offend those who are the "haves" in the crowd. God is no respecter of persons, that is, He pays no attention whatsoever to our worldly accomplishments when it comes to determining spiritual wisdom. The greatest discernment in the spirit realm often comes not from the men and women of success, but from the simple folk whose minds are not cluttered with the world's philosophies, but who simply take God at His wonderful word and frame their philosophy and theology on Scripture alone. When Christ came into your life, you entered a different realm altogether, and what once constituted primary goals and values should have been turned upside down. You are to now, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

That means that how big your house is, how new your car

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is, how professional your career is, how many titles you have or degrees you possess are not the primary basis for your acceptance. Who you are and what you own are no longer the criteria. What's in your heart is. And if your life is a reflection of the love of God and your mind a storehouse for the word of God, you are a candidate for leadership in the kingdom. Oftentimes, in fact, your success in the world even becomes a stumblingblock to spiritual oversight. The next verse adds:

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?
(James 2:5)

God has actually reached out in a peculiar way to those who have not achieved great success by the world's standards. The reason?

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

That no flesh should glory in his presence.

(I Corinthians 1:26-29)

This does not mean that God does not use the wise, the wealthy, or the well-known in the kingdom. It means that He does not use them because of their wisdom or wealth; He may only use them in spite of their wisdom or wealth. If He chooses to use them, it will be after they have humbled themselves and died to their wisdom or their wealth, so "no flesh can glory in His presence".

This understanding makes the aggressive clawing for success that characterizes our world totally at odds with God's plan. God has chosen the poor of this world to become rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. That may not be reason enough for you to seek to be poor, but it may well be reason enough for you to be satisfied to be poor, and it ought to slow down to a crawl your overpowering zeal to become rich or famous.

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As you disciple or mentor others, be it men or women or children, this concept must be imparted from Scripture. It is 180 degrees from the world's concepts, and apart from the indwelling Spirit interpreting it, it makes no sense. In Christ, however, led by the Spirit, it is the only thing that does make sense. All compromises at this point affect every other thing in your life.

2- In fact, Paul said that the desire for worldly possessions is a malignancy that ultimately will destroy you, spiritually. He wrote this to his disciple, Timothy:

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

(I Timothy 6:6-11)

Paul is saying to his young disciple: "If you are spending your life trying to create a legacy of riches to leave for the next generation or to use to establish your identity in this generation, you are a fool." You say, "Everyone does it." Then everyone's wrong. You will take with you into eternity exactly what you brought with you when you came. Nothing. Zero. That is why, when God puts clothes on your back and food in your mouth, you ought to be content. And whatever more He gives you ought to make you ecstatic, no matter how much more your neighbor has.

Then Paul goes on (and here is where it gets really painfully clear). He says: "If the focus of your life is on gaining riches or the things riches can buy, you are walking into a satanic snare (a booby trap) that will capture you when you least expect it and destroy you and those around you. Finally, he gives the reason. The love of money is at the root of all evil. Now I did not say that, God did. Through the apostle Paul, He placed in Scripture (all of which is God-breathed) this clear warning and this clear reason

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for the warning. Pursuing “things” will lead you into a minefield of false values, and from that satanic drive will emanate every other form of arrogance and every other form of rebellion.

Driven by money, success breeds self-importance, and self-importance breeds the kind of independence that defies the Lordship of Christ. In fact, the Lordship of Christ actually flourishes in times of poverty or the absence of the power money can buy. Again, it does not say money is evil. Mark that. It says the temptations that follow elevating money to a high priority or a driving priority will ultimately put a spear in your heart and you will be facing sorrows you never thought you’d see or experience. The phrase “love of money” is from the Greek and means “an extreme desire to have possessions”. It is a hunger to become wealthy that may be subtle and even unnoticed in a success-driven society; but while it is going relatively unnoticed, it is eating away at the very fiber of your life, destroying the spiritual priorities that ought to govern your choices, until you no longer recognize the difference. The phrase “food and raiment” means basic sustenance and covering. It means the basic necessities of life, food to stay alive and clothing to keep your body covered. It does not mean steak dinners and Gucci handbags or custom suits. It means the basics. The phrase, “He that will be rich” means, “He that desires an abundance of outward possessions”.

You can’t let the focus of your life be on making money and serving God at the same time.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

(Matthew 6:24)

That word “mammon” literally means “treasure” or “riches”. It doesn’t mean you can’t have treasures; it means you cannot serve those treasures. They cannot be your masters. You cannot be their slave. But don’t ignore that passage just because you don’t see yourself as a slave to your money. What it means is: if you have a decision to make and on the one hand you see a need in the kingdom, and God lays it on your heart, and on the other hand, you see something you want but don’t have to have, and you choose to buy that thing or take that trip, you just made a choice as to which master to serve. It doesn’t mean you are evil. It doesn’t mean you aren’t a growing Christian. It means you made a choice based on whom at that moment you would serve,

and you made the wrong choice. And Paul is saying, “Down the road, if you don’t turn around, you’ll find yourself making other compromises until you have lost your spiritual edge and don’t even realize it.”

3- While God gifts some to a higher level of income, and thus a higher level of responsibility, He has laid the groundwork in Scripture for us to be content with “middle class” Christianity.

Proverbs 30 says this:

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:

Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain. (Proverbs 30:5-9)

The word of God is the only thing in this world that is consistent and faithful to the mind of God. It is the basis for our choices. With that in mind, the writer asks God for two things:

1) *That God protect him from becoming proud or a liar*, both of which were said to be things God hates.

2) *That God keep him a “middle-class” citizen*. That He give him “food convenient”. That means simply a prescribed amount. No more. No less. He goes on to add that would have to mean “neither poverty nor riches”. Poverty would be that state of financial weakness that required welfare or outside help to manage. Riches would be that state of financial prosperity that meant he would not need to be dependent on God or anyone else, because he was able to lay up treasures on earth which seemed to be sufficient to meet his needs.

He goes beyond that request, however. He explains to God that he understands the pitfalls of both extremes in the realm of spiritual temptations, and that is his concern, since the pure word of God is his only guide. He says:

If he is too blessed financially, he will lose sight of his need to

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trust God on a day-to-day basis, choosing instead to put his trust in what he has laid up, as the foolish rich man did in Luke 12. Remember?

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)

He knew that like that rich farmer, he would be tempted to trust in his riches rather than in God's faithfulness, so he asked God not to make him rich.

His second request was that God not make him too poor, either, because knowing his own weakness, he knew that he would be tempted to steal from others or demand of others what wasn't rightfully his. So he asked God to keep him a "middle-class" believer.

Have you ever noticed how few countries in the world still have a "middle-class"? I believe that is by Satan's design. In countries where spiritual warfare is flourishing, you generally see only the very rich and the very poor. It is in this environment that the enemy can best suppress the freedom man needs to worship God and through oppression attempt to bring man under the dominance of a system or a man who is under Satan's control. In Scripture, there is great blessing in poverty for those who can handle it, and great safety in middle-class Christianity for those who can't.

4- In reality, Paul said that to the mature Christian, even severe losses in income or net worth will not affect his or her perspective of God's sovereignty.

You are familiar with the passage. It is found in Philippians 4,

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Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

— I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
(Philippians 4:9-13)

Paul was encouraging the Philippian church to pay attention to some key things he had learned the hard way. That is a part of mentoring. You seek for God to take pictures of the crises He has put you through and show those on the screen of the hearts of those who walk behind you, so that hopefully some of those lessons can be learned by their watching you. This particular lesson is perhaps one that most of us never learn. It is this:

It is possible to become so identified with Jesus and the kingdom that having everything or having nothing is not enough to affect how you feel about God and His will for your life. Paul said he knew how to be full and how to be hungry. That word “full” means “completely satisfied”. The word “hungry” is translated “to be needy, to suffer want”. Imagine. Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is so central in his life that he could suddenly be a millionaire and his priorities would not change, and he could suddenly become a pauper and his praise life would not be altered one iota. The reason is simple: Only that which is eternal will last, and where eternal things were concerned, “he could do all things through Christ who actually enabled him both to will and to do of God’s good pleasure.”

It is possible, then, for Jesus to be so predominate in our thinking, that “things” and “possessions” will not only not be the central focus of our lives, but will be so subordinated to things spiritual, that once we have food and raiment, we will therewith be content. You say, “That’s not natural”. Agreed. It has to be supernatural. Therefore it only can happen “in Christ who strengtheneth us”.

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5- Ultimately, God sees how we view money and things as an x-ray of our hearts developed in the laboratory of eternity to reveal who we really are. This final truth we must pass on to those we walk alongside. How do we know this is truth? Look at Luke 16, coupled with Matthew 6:

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

(Luke 16:10-12)

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Matthew 6:19-21)

I believe that God is asking each of us this very day, "How willing would you be to leave all of your wealth behind if it meant knowing me better and fulfilling my will?" Moses, as he mentored Joshua, must have explained that. He must have told him how:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

(Hebrews 11:24-26)

These are things you simply must impart to those you disciple or mentor, both by instruction, correction, and example. Churches need to make the same examinations. How do they spend their money? What part of their income goes to make themselves more comfortable, and what part goes to the ends of the earth to make disciples? That is, remember, what the church was placed here for. And that is, remember, why we have been left for a season on this round planet while we await our first-class ticket to eternity.

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We have been left here to lead men and women into the kingdom so they can join us on that ticket to glory, and we are here to see them grow in Christ so they can, in turn, lead still more men and women into the kingdom, and on and on it goes.

Everything else in life is secondary. Does that mean we are not to care for our families? Not at all. If we don't, we are worse than an infidel. Does it mean we are not to ever want "things"? No, it means we are not to trade in the rewards that await us in heaven for treasures here that are passing away. Has the church of Jesus Christ through the years in some cases misused these principles to make people give to things out of false guilt and presumption? Absolutely. Does that nullify the truths involved? Absolutely not. Those who abuse these truths will have to answer to God. But so will those who do not teach them.

So important are these principles that unless we pour them into the hearts of our children and those we mentor, we will be preaching and teaching and rebuking and encouraging, all the while, missing the mark. The truth is: "Everything we own belongs to God. He owes us nothing. He has promised us food and clothing, and He has asked us to realize that everything else goes into a pool from which we must constantly choose, minute by minute, day after day, to use either for ourselves, or as tools to change lives for God's glory. Does that mean you give it all away? It did for that widow, and it pleased the heart of God. It probably won't for you. But it will mean that every decision you ever make where "things" are involved will be made with eternity in mind. You ask, "What do you call theology like that?"

Beloved, you call it Christianity.

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For Further Study and Application

1- Have you memorized and reviewed Psalm 27:10? Have you thought of creative ways to teach that truth to those you minister to? Ask God for fresh, new ways to communicate the reality of how He uses rejection to bring us to a deeper understanding of Himself.

2- How does an understanding of the sovereignty of God impact our ability to trust God in the arena of finances and “things”? How much of your energy and the focus of your thought life is centered on making more money, buying more things, and having more possessions? What does that do to you spiritually? How do you know?

3- We tend to judge others based on their position in this world. Does God do that? How do you know? Why is it a danger in the church?

4- Can you explain James 2:5? Does I Corinthians 1:26-29 help?

5- What do you think “the love of money is the root of all evil” really means? Is “the love of money” a subtle thing? What does Paul say in I Timothy 6 will ultimately happen? How does he say to resist it? (vs 11)

6- Does Matthew 6:24 seem too harsh to you? Why do you think there is no middle ground? What does the word “serve” mean?

7- Does Proverbs 30:5-9 seem to build a case for a “middle class”? Why does Satan seem to fight that? Can you relate to the two temptations listed in that passage? Have you ever prayed like that to God? Or have you prayed that God would simply give you more?

8- Can you even imagine what it would be like to be so spiritually in tune that to lose everything or to gain millions would not really affect your walk with God? Ask God to give you that perspective.

9- Memorize Philippians 4:11-13.

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