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The Legacy of Life: The Miracle of Mentoring

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

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As we get older we begin to think, though often a bit late, about what we would like our legacy to be, what kind of summary would we like written over our tombstone. For some, it would be the sweet smell of success: a big house, a nice car, lots of stocks and bonds and bank accounts to leave behind. For others, it might be the aura of recognition: a talent or skill that so set us apart that when people think of art or athletics or music or gardening or hospitality, they think fondly of us.

Those kinds of legacies, except for rare exceptions, however, are short-lived. Someone else comes along and because they are alive and we are not, they become the new standard and we gradually fade into the “Oh, yeah, I remember him” or “Yes, I think I know who she was” category.

Some like to be remembered for their appearance, but lo and behold, as the years take their toll, they find that what was once their trademark has ceased to have the appeal, and they hide from the public, lest they be remembered for what they *are* rather than what they *were*.

I cannot help but note that we tend to remember our loved ones, not as they were when we were young but as they were in their final years: dependent, less than alert, often less than sensitive, and more demanding. That’s unfair. They may have had fifty or sixty years of life when they were a positive force in our life, but our memories tend to grasp the latter times and those sweet times of beauty are overshadowed by pictures in our minds of those we love as they appeared with Alzheimer’s or dementia of some kind and their lives do not remain etched in our hearts as they should be remembered.

What then, is the answer? What kind of legacy can we leave that will live on after we are gone, yet will not reflect the decline of our physical or mental abilities as the years take their toll? I think Scripture has an answer. I think the answer is *people*. I think the only legacy that really remains is the legacy of lives

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touched and changed by ours as we were given the privilege of living on planet earth.

Paul wrote tenderly in I Thessalonians:

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
(I Thessalonians 2:19)

Paul asked the question: “What hope is there for some kind of legacy, some kind of lasting imprint to leave behind when we leave?” Then he answered his own question: “You’re it, you’re my legacy.” No, these were not the only ones Paul had poured his life into, and no, they weren’t the only legacy Paul would leave behind. But when Paul looked at a wall-to-wall scan of his whole life, he did not focus on the multitudes who would have been touched by his letters to the churches, nor even of the believers who would have been transformed by watching his prison ministry flourish. His eyes looked for a few good men, men who had faithfully listened and learned and obeyed. It was to one of those men that Paul gave the formula for developing a legacy in one of his letters:

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.
(II Timothy 2:1,2)

Paul said, “Timothy, you are a part of my legacy. Now go out and allow God to create a legacy of your own. Find faithful men like yourself and teach them what I taught you, *but be sure they are the kind who won’t put what you teach them in the bank of their hearts and hoard it. Have them be men who will give away what they have received, men who will teach others also.*”

It has been part of the plan of God since the beginning. He desires that those who would leave their imprint on the sands of history leave not a picture of themselves, but rather an impression of the image of God clearly engraved on the heart of another, who in turn can reproduce that impression on still others, until those living portraits live on and on and on, as God reflects His life through those He has found to be faithful conduits of truth.

It is that principle that we look at for the next few weeks in a brief side trip as we come to the end of Deuteronomy, chapter three. There, Moses has implored God to let him enter the land

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of promise, the land of his dreams. God had to say, “No”. Not because He didn’t love Moses; not because He didn’t trust Moses; but rather because one sweltering day, Moses disobeyed God and marred the image God was attempting to imprint on the hearts of His people of the Coming One. He was asked to “speak to the Rock”, but in anger he “smote the Rock twice”. The Rock, indeed spoke of Jesus who would one day be smitten for the sins of man, and Moses had already been charged with striking the rock and had done so.

So as Moses pled for God to ignore His own word, God had to say, “No”. Having done that, He had an immediate word for Moses.

Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.

Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold *it* with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.

(Deuteronomy 3:26b-28)

Don’t take that passage superficially. This was no sudden idea of God’s. Moses had been mentoring Joshua for years. He was his “Timothy”. He was his “legacy”. He was a faithful man who could teach others also. Slowly, carefully, continually, Moses had poured his life into Joshua until their hearts all but beat as one. Moses knew God as no one else had known Him. His heart’s desire was that Joshua know Him in exactly the same way. He prayed for him. He prayed with him. He trained him. He let him witness his life in every conceivable situation. Now God is telling Moses to hand over the mantle of leadership to his disciple once and for all. And he gave Moses three specific instructions as the rod of responsibility changed hands:

- 1- He was to *charge* him.
- 2- He was to *encourage* him.
- 3- He was to *strengthen* him.

Please don’t pass over that verse lightly. It holds the key to the process of mentoring. It holds the ingredients for baking in the oven of life a legacy that will literally hold the flavor of a godly man or woman. Moses was being told how to be sure that his

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life lived on. All three words form a single thought, the thought of encouragement or exhortation. They are a triad of methods, however, each of which complements the other, and none of which stands alone.

1- He was to charge him.

The word “charge” is a commandment or instruction which is expected to be carried out. The word carries with it more than the thought of casually suggesting a course of action. It is defined in your concordance as “to command, to commission, to order”. It is a word used by those who are in authority when they are giving necessary orders to those under their command. Here are some examples of how both the Hebrew and Greek words are used in Scripture:

And Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.
(Genesis 26:11)

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,
I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man;

And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: (I Kings 2:1-3)

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. (Mark 9:25)

And he straitly charged them, and commanded *them* to tell no man that thing; (Luke 9:21)

Those are only a few of many places this word and this thought are communicated from God to man and from man to men under authority. Moses had earned the right to “charge” Joshua with certain responsibilities and with certain parameters. For forty years this man had walked alongside his mentor. He was referred to in Joshua, chapter one, as “Moses’ minister”. That means he considered himself a servant or a disciple of Moses.

In the first passage listed above (Genesis 26:11), we see the word used as issuing a commandment that carried with

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it consequences if not obeyed. He charged the people and his charge had teeth in it. In the second passage, David charged his son with the responsibility of maintaining godly character and obedience to God's commands. The consequences listed were positive ones. If he kept this charge, he would prosper in all that he did. The New Testament illustrations include a direct word of rebuke to a demonic spirit and a sharp warning to the disciples that carries with it the parallel thought of a command.

This first admonition to Moses, then, was to charge Joshua by letting him know that this was not an optional ministry opportunity. This was the moment for which he had been trained. This was his curtain call. Up until now, it had all been a rehearsal. Now the main character in the drama was being removed, and his stand-in was to become the man of the hour. Having waited in the wings all this time, he now could hear God call his name and tell all of those in the theater of life that it was replacement time. Moses was retiring. Joshua, trained for a generation as an understudy, was coming on stage. It was not optional for Josh. It was payback time.

Discipleship or mentoring requires a level of commitment on the part of the mentored that says, "When the time is right, should God call, I am willing to take what I have learned and give it back to the next generation." It requires on the part of the mentor, the mentality that, if need be, says "I am willing to step aside and let the ones I have given my life to take my place." It requires an expectation of expendability. That, Beloved, is not easy, especially after all those years in charge. Moses, like so many of us, fought it when the time came. God, however, gave him no choice. And he gave Joshua no choice, either. This had been in the plan book for a lifetime. Now it was time for the next life to take over.

2- He was to *encourage* him.

The second word, "encourage" carries with it a much more acceptable thought to the natural mind. It literally means: "to build one's mental strength through positive input". We understand what it means to encourage someone. We like that word. It has, in fact, become a substitute for rebuke or correction in our day. Parents don't charge or command their children much any more. They encourage them. The problem is: if you *only* encourage them, they gain no understanding of the concept of authority;

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and when God corrects them, they become angry and hard, rather than convicted and compliant. Encouragement is a companion to correction, not a substitute. That is true as parents, as teachers, as leaders, and as mentors. This word has the connotation of building up one's spirit for the short-term. It is that which lifts the spirits and builds the confidence. Here are three Scriptural examples of its usage:

But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. (Deuteronomy 1:38)

And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD, (II Chronicles 35:2)

They helped every one his neighbour; and *every one* said to his brother, Be of good courage.

So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, *and* he that smootheth *with* the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, *that* it should not be moved. (Isaiah 41:6)

These three passages all have to do with service. They all imply God's calling and God's help, and they are all words that would elicit short-term positive response. Correction and instruction without encouragement lead to despair. Encouragement with no oversight or command leads to the absence of authority and the presence of chaos, or "every man doing what is right in his own sight". They each require the other, but both of those are secondary, in a sense. The third word is key to making the other two profitable in the long haul. It is the word "strengthen".

3- He was to *strengthen* him.

That word carries with it the connotation of long-term transformation. It has to do with character change brought about by God's intervention in the spirit realm. It seems to always relate to long-term endurance or staying power. It is that which changes the character and thus allows the heart to see life from God's perspective. You can command and encourage and change behavior temporarily. But if a man or woman is to stand in the gap for the long haul, they must be changed from the inside out; they must be "strengthened" in the Lord by the Spirit of God until their character is literally transformed into the likeness of God. *That is the real essence of Biblical mentoring or discipleship.*

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Anything less than that involves temporary redirection, but not eternal restoration. Mentoring is the process of applying the word of God by the Spirit of God to the heart of man or woman until that man or woman becomes Christ-controlled. That word “strengthen” is used this way:

Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

(Isaiah 41:10)

My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

(Psalm 119:28)

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

(Psalm 27:14)

And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

(Zechariah 10:12)

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

(Luke 22:32)

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

(I Peter 5:10)

Correction, encouragement, and character transformation. This is the trinity of mentoring. Moses was to be sure that Joshua had a balanced approach and was willing to utilize all three just as Moses had, through the years, used them in his life. In the next few studies, we will walk with Moses and others through Scripture and see how these concepts work together to produce a man or woman filled with God’s Spirit, motivated and controlled by God’s word, who *is able to teach others also*.

It is that last part of the equation (strengthening) that most of us tend to overlook. We see external errors in behavior in our children or in our disciples or in our students and we vacillate over whether or not to correct them. Often we hesitate, and then when we do, we do so in anger, and the rebuke is taken as a personal offense. Still other times, we decide to take a more positive approach and we seek to encourage them in right behavior rather than trying to rebuke them for wrong behavior. The problem is that they then often misinterpret the correction as

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a gracious suggestion, and often do not accept the seriousness of its long-term consequences.

What I believe Scripture teaches is that correction and encouragement are only tools designed by God to prepare us for “soul surgery”. Soul surgery is the process of taking areas of sin or areas of need in someone’s life and seeking to find the root problem behind the offensive behavior or attitude so that the Spirit of God, using the Word of God, can actually surgically remove the cause of the problem and replace it with that part of the new man which “*after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Ephesians 4:24). In other words, God’s goal is for us to be “*renewed in the spirit of our mind*” (Ephesians 4:23). That is the task of the Holy Spirit and is accomplished through prayer, allowing God to do *whatever He deems necessary to bring about the right environment for transformation*. Otherwise, we only change external behavior and some outward manifestations of attitudes, leaving the old man in control of those parts of the heart that are feeding the external evidences.

When you are dealing with unbelievers (children, employees, or those under you in rank in the military or in other organizations) rebuke (by both education and correction) and encouragement (positive motivational helps) are *your only tools*. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, the spirit of man cannot be “strengthened”, and *character cannot be transformed*. You may succeed in altering external behavior and/or revealed attitudes, *but the heart of man cannot be changed by either correction or encouragement*. It can only be changed when the Holy Spirit transforms the human spirit by means of God’s “living” Word.

That Word is really alive. It is powerful. It is sharper than a two edged sword. It is able to divide the soul from the spirit, the joints from the marrow. That means that it is a surgical tool in the hands of the Great Physician, and it can take that basic selfish nature, that spirit of greed, that cesspool of anger, that driven cry for lust, and literally replace it with the Mind of Christ. That new man then produces the opposite of each of those negative traits and actually demonstrates something so different that those who view the change are apt to inquire about what has happened to us, and we are to, according to Peter,

Be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks us for a reason for the hope that is in us with meekness and fear.
(I Peter 3:15)

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Those, then, are the three-fold reflections of the transformation process: charge, encourage, and strengthen. The first reveals needs both through instruction and correction. The second builds up the soul through positive reinforcement. The third actually transforms the spirit by means of the Holy Spirit using the living, vibrant word of God. The first two help reveal the needs of the soul. The third takes the needs of the soul and relates them to the spirit and deals with them in the spirit realm.

Satan will do virtually anything to prevent God from strengthening the believer through spiritual transformation. He will allow correction, then try to bring about depression or discouragement as though there were no hope. He will allow encouragement, then try by bolstering man's self-image, to imply that something good in man can produce fruit and thus please God. But, oh, how he fights it when we begin to pray and meditate on God's word, acknowledging our needs, but at the same time acknowledging our helplessness apart from God. That sense of surrender, coupled with the power of the Living Word, can allow God's tender knife to cut away the recurring sins of the flesh and reach down into the deeper recesses of the heart and produce a brand new person. It is no wonder Satan cannot stand that.

Moses had spent much of his later years preparing Joshua for this task. He had charged him, encouraged him, and strengthened him. Now the time of training was over. The main event was on the horizon. The coach had to turn the team over to his assistant, and just in time for the big game. Moses was leaving quite a legacy: a legacy of character, a legacy of good works, a legacy of obedience. But even more lasting than that, he was leaving the legacy of a man, a man he had walked beside and poured his heart into until what God had taught him, he had taught Joshua.

That is the essence of the Christian life. It is a life in which God transfers His life into us, charging us to transfer our life into others. That process of "transfer of life" occurs many ways: through parenting, through teaching, through example, through preaching, and through mentoring. Mentoring is the passing on of principles and convictions to others for the purpose of building character. You can do it in many ways, even as Moses did. It is, however, often best done one-to-one, life-to-life, heart-to-heart. That's why parenting is perhaps the most effective means of mentoring there is. Isaiah 28 tells us:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make

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to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts.

For precept must *be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:
(Isaiah 28:9,10)

It is a process and it involves a lifetime. True mentoring involves building one truth upon another; one principle upon another. Knowing when to do that, and how much pressure to apply involves close examination, careful scrutiny, and a heart of love. It is not a clinical procedure. God does it through you, and God always mentors in love. But love is not a gooey, sentimental process that overlooks blind spots and pretends. It is a real world procedure that involves correction, obedience, encouragement and spiritual surgery.

Joshua, as noted, according to Joshua 1:1 was Moses' minister. A minister is one who learns while serving and serves while learning. It is someone who demonstrates a servant heart by appropriating truth and expressing it to others through faithfulness. A minister is not simply someone who holds meetings and plans agendas, though they may do that. A minister is not someone who simply gets paid to serve in a given area of church leadership. A true minister is one who gives his life away under the mentorship of others. He may or may not be on a church staff. He is someone who is serving while leading and leading while serving. In II Timothy 3:10, Paul explained the process to Timothy. This is what he said:

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*;

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

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All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (II Timothy 3:10-17)

I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (II Timothy 4:1,2)

Timothy was Paul's minister. He served Paul while learning from Paul. He listened and he learned while he was laboring. He labored while he was listening and learning. As we work our way through this process called mentoring, let's begin by seeing what it was Paul was saying to Timothy. He was saying that there were, first of all, four things Tim was being taught:

- 1- Doctrine (what we know),
- 2- Manner of life (how we live out what we know),
- 3- Purpose (what's truly important to us), and
- 4- Character (who we really are: our faith, our patience, our love).

If you watch carefully, you will see that many expressions of discipleship or mentoring in our day utilize or major on one or more of those four things, but not all of them. If you, however, take *all four* of them and utilize the three-fold plan that God gave Moses to use with Joshua, you may find a complete plan for transferring one life to another. You communicate doctrine, manner of life, purpose and character, and you do it through charging or challenging, encouraging, and spiritual strengthening or transformation by the Word. All of that together forms a pattern for mentoring that carries with it a Biblical seal of approval.

First of all, Paul told Timothy that he had communicated to him and through him to others his *doctrine*. Don't let that word frighten you. In our generation, the word has come to have harsh theological overtones. You aren't learning "doctrine" unless you are studying from books so heavy you can't lift them, written by men with lots of letters after their names. That's one source of doctrine. But the word διδασκαλία {did-as-kal-ee'-ah} literally means "teaching" or "instruction". A child learning about Biblical

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truth in Sunday School is getting doctrine. A new convert in a small group Bible study learning about his eternal security or the work of the Holy Spirit is learning doctrine. A couple in a seminar on parenting, learning Biblical principles, is learning doctrine.

Doctrine is teaching from the word of God. The pastor who shares a message on anger from Scripture is teaching doctrine just as much as a professor teaching a class on eschatology. The first way we are to charge, encourage and strengthen our disciples is by teaching them truth. We need to see that they have access to sound instruction from the word of God. It doesn't mean we have to teach them. It means we are responsible to see that they are exposed to good teaching.

The second thing Paul passed on to Tim was his manner of life. That is nothing more than doctrine put into practice. We can communicate Biblical precepts about anger, and even give them books to read or Scriptures to memorize about anger. If, however, in the process, they see us lose our tempers or seethe in anger over some injustice, *we are not mentoring them in the area of anger, we are confusing them*. If what we teach and what we live are not in harmony, what we teach is of no effect. Paul's manner of life (how he conducted his life as a Christian) was of far more import than what he taught. It had the capacity to either verify or nullify what he taught. And so does our manner of life.

The third thing Paul was communicating to Timothy was his purpose. That was the way he structured or prioritized his life. Paul told Timothy in this passage: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution". That's good advice. But had Paul compromised his convictions to avoid persecution, or growled and complained that God allowed him to suffer persecution, Timothy would have discarded those words entirely. Paul's life was so structured that anyone could see that his life was totally expendable for the kingdom's sake. He was "crucified with Christ". He said that this was his reason for living:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,
and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable
unto his death;

(Philippians 3:10)

Indeed, it was evident. He didn't have to tell Timothy that. Tim could see it. And it became Timothy's purpose in living as well. Finally, and here was the crucial part: Paul mentored Timothy by allowing Tim to see the character of Christ shine through him. He

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said: “Tim, you have seen my faith, my longsuffering, my charity, my patience.” In other words, “You have seen Christ living in me. Therefore, you know that if God can take a Christian-killer like me and turn me into a man of patience and faith and love, it is not I, but Christ living in me.”

Paul taught the life of surrender, but more important, he lived it. His very manner of life, his priorities or purposes that governed his choices, and the very nature of God that flowed through him verified what he taught.

What about you? Are you pouring your life into others? You don't have to be a teacher or a preacher or an author to do that. You only have to be willing to take the time and be willing to be both vulnerable and available to others. Chances are, if you are growing in the Lord, it is because someone has taken the time to teach you and to share with you how it really works in a real world.

Like Joshua, at some point in your life, God is going to say to you (and it may be now), “Dear one, you have listened and watched long enough. It is time to take the land, and it's time for you to give back to others what others have given to you. Charge them, encourage them, and strengthen them. It is your golden opportunity to leave a legacy: the legacy of a life.”

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For Further Study and Application

1- What words would you use to describe the kind of spiritual legacy you would like to leave behind? Are there lives that will be left behind when God calls you home that will be a part of your legacy? Do you pray for them regularly? Do you keep in touch with them? What will be the first thing people say about you when your name is mentioned after you're gone?

2- What was the prerequisite Paul gave to Timothy about the kind of men he was to mentor? How can you determine that?

3- How mature do you have to be to lead someone else? Can a twelve year old "mentor" a six year old? Can a growing Christian mentor a new believer? What reasons do you use for not pouring your life into others?

4- Do a study, using your concordance, of those three words God gave Moses to use with Joshua: "charge", "encourage", and "strengthen". Which comes easiest for you? How does a balance of those seem to be a three-fold cord not easily broken?

5- Why is it impossible to "strengthen" an unbeliever? What often happens when we try? Why is the Word so essential to the process of "strengthening"?

6- Can you teach "doctrine"? Of course you can. Doctrine is Bible truth meant to be applied to the life. What if you are not a teacher? That is not a prerequisite. You can share with others what you know. Are you willing?

7- How does your "manner of life" impact your "doctrine"? Do others see a difference between what you say and who you are?

8- Memorize II Timothy 3:10.

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