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Part 2

**Mentoring Through
the Word of God:
Agent of Change**

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

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Part 2

Mentoring Through the Word of God: Agent of Change

When we hold a Bible in our hands, we hold in our hands the Word of life. May we never take it lightly. It is the actual living Word of the living God, accompanied by our own personal interpreter, the Holy Spirit. And yet, so often, we do not give it the respect it is due. We have allowed it to become familiar. We have even allowed ourselves to consider ourselves experts because we have heard it and read it so many times. We forget that it is a living Person residing in a living book and He is drawing living water from a well that can never run dry.

We forget that every time it is read or heard, God has a new word for us. His word to you at that moment may be slightly different than His word to me because He personalizes it until it separates the soul from the spirit. It is that personal. Its absolutes and its principles, however, never change. His word on lying will always be the same. His word on stealing will always be the same. His word on how to find eternal life will always be the same. Not almost the same. The same. Yet He will use that word to speak to lost hearts, drawing them to trust Christ, and use that same word at that same moment to encourage a different believer in his or her faith. At one moment, as it is read, the person sitting next to you may be convicted of his or her need to be changed by God's Spirit in a given area. That same word at that same moment may have encouraged you about God's faithfulness. How can that be?

It is because His word is alive. We cannot grasp a Living Word because we do not have anything else with which to compare it. The living word appears to be a book. It looks like a book, feels like a book, is sold in book stores. The Bible is considered by the world to be the best-selling book in history. So in that sense, it is a book. It is printed on paper, bound, and sold, not only in Christian book stores, but in secular stores as well. So the world thinks it is a book. The problem is: many Christians view it in the same light.

They toss it in the back of their car and leave it there. They

buy new translations and stack them on a book shelf. They have their name engraved on leather covers, expressing ownership of that book. But it is not a book. It is a Living Word. It contains words that, when interpreted by God's Spirit are so powerful they can literally divide that which is spiritual from that which is not. The Spirit can then take that word and reach down inside the heart of the person reading or hearing it and touch chords, turning them into anthems of praise, or touch sin, turning it into deep burdens to confess, or touch thought patterns and cause them to come alive or be changed.

No other book can do that, for no other book is alive. Any other book contains words by an author which represent that author's opinions or information that author has gathered. Those words go into the mind of the reader or hearer and can affect their thoughts or emotions, causing them to think differently or feel differently. They cannot, however, touch their spirit, because they are not alive and never will be.

The word of God, however, is alive and powerful and razor-sharp, and those we mentor or disciple must come to see it as that. Otherwise, as time goes by, it will become more and more familiar, and they will begin to view it as something they have studied and read, and thus, know. The truth is: the longer you walk with God, the more precious this book must become. The more times you have heard a given passage, the more power it ought to possess. The passages God has used in your life before are not used up. They now have a deeper well from which to feed your thirsty soul; a well filled with remembrances of former times when God spoke to you through those very same verses.

And so we return to our look at mentoring, and at the place the Scripture must play in that process. In our last study, we looked at three basic issues and asked ourselves three basic questions:

1- Are we becoming more in awe of God's word every day? Is it growing and multiplying in our lives and in our ministries? Or have we become anesthetized to its power and its preeminence?

2- Are we being constantly reminded that the word of God is the one thing in life that is perfect, immutable, and eternal? It will never change, fade, disintegrate, or depart. It will always be what it is even after everything on this earth is gone. Everything it says will come true exactly as God promised. He will not stop

until everything has been fulfilled.

3- Are we becoming increasingly aware that the word is our personal offensive weapon against Satan and his host as we daily come face to face with the spiritual warfare that he has designed to destroy us and God has allowed to shape us? Are we placing the promises of God on our hearts so that when Satan attacks, we, like Jesus, can simply say, "It is written" and watch the enemy flee?

Those were the three questions we asked ourselves in our first look at Scripture and its place in mentoring. Without an understanding and a reminder of those three issues, the others may not carry their full weight. Assuming, however, that we have revisited the cumulative blessing of the word of God, the eternal blessing of the word of God, and the spiritual warfare issue of the word of God, we are ready to look at a few other things the word says about itself; issues every person we disciple or pour our lives into must continually be aware of. They will not all be new thoughts. If you need only new thoughts to be challenged, you have an incredible memory. Most of us must, like the children of Israel, and like the disciples, be constantly reminded of the same things. With that in mind, we proceed:

4- The word of God is the source of our faith. The passage is not new; neither is the thought. The issue is: do we understand it and apply it? Romans 10 says,

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10:12-17)

Paul begins by reminding us that God possesses no prejudice. The Jews are His chosen people. It is to that nation and to those

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people that He has so richly given His heart and His soul. He has given them a place in history, a land in which to live, a heritage beyond understanding. One day soon, they will again be on center stage as He reveals His mighty power and His precious love to the world through tiny Israel. They were His “called-out” ones. But as they rejected Messiah, God opened the door to all who call upon Him (vs 12). Though there is a special place in His heart for the Jew, when it comes to pouring out His love in redemption, so rich and so pure is that love, that there is literally no difference between Jew and Gentile.

The Cross obliterates the distinctions. Male and female. Jew and Greek. Slave and free. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. That means anyone. That means everyone who calls upon Him. That wealthy corporate executive who has made it to the top but has an empty heart. That drug-addicted criminal on death row whose life has gone out of control and for whom eternity may come at any time. That patient on the operating table who is facing a physical crossroad. That doctor doing the surgery who may be facing an emotional crossroad. No difference. God sees them all as redeemable, lovable, valuable souls.

But first they must believe. And the passage says, first someone must tell them. Someone must go where they are. It may be to the ends of the earth. It may be to the depths of the ghetto. It may be across the street. God sees the feet of those who respond to His call to go as “beautiful”, because they are fulfilling their God-intended calling. Someone must go. But that someone must go with the word of God in their heart and in their hand. Methods and manpower may cause people to listen. But, Beloved, what they listen to must be the word of God if they are to be saved.

I Peter 1 says this:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

(I Peter 1:23-25)

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The Word of God is the agent of God to bring someone into the kingdom of God. What ought to be our criteria for measuring the readiness of men and women to go to the mission field? Their skills? To some degree. Their experience? That helps. Their creativity? God honors that. But, Beloved, they can have all of that, and if they do not possess a hunger for, and an understanding of the word of God, the spiritual fruit to be borne will be limited. It is the word of God that touches a lost heart, finds the point of sin that brings awareness of their lostness, and opens their eyes by God's Spirit to a Living Savior who died on a cross to the pay the price for that sin.

But even more than that. For believers to grow in their faith, they must be fed and taught the word of God. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. It is faith, according to Hebrews 11 that allows us, for example, to understand the creation story.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed
by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not
made of things which do appear. (Hebrews 11:3)

You can't understand that any other way. You have to take it by faith. And where does that faith come from? "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." The whole of our walk with God is an exercise of faith. We cannot see Him. We cannot audibly hear His voice. We cannot reach out and touch Him, though we know He is there. It is imperative that we walk by faith. Therefore, it is imperative that we immerse ourselves in the word of God.

It is His word of comfort that gives us the faith to walk through the darkness; yea through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil. It is His word of confidence that allows us to face the enemy's onslaughts with the knowledge that "we need not fear what man can do to me." It is His word of prophecy that opens our eyes to see that though this world is falling apart, "we have a new heaven and a new earth" awaiting us one day. Yes, we must take it by faith. He said it. That settles it. But it is only to the degree that we know He said it and that we allow His word to permeate our hearts and minds that we will walk by faith.

The word is not a convenient "help" for those who want to grow spiritually. It is not simply a multi-purpose vitamin that will build up our spirits, though it is that. It is much more than that.

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Peter reminds us:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

(1 Peter 2:2,3)

I don't believe that verse is intended only for new Christians, though it is often used that way. The analogy is that if we have tasted of the grace of God, we are to thirst for the word of God the way a newborn thirsts for his mother's milk. The principle is: that word, like that mother's milk, is the necessary ingredient for spiritual growth. There are substitutes for a mother's milk; there is no substitute for the word of God.

But what if a baby doesn't naturally thirst for milk? Do you just let it go hungry? No, the milk is not just to satisfy the baby's thirst. The milk contains the necessary ingredients to help the child grow. In the same way, we often do not hunger for the word the way God wants us to. Sometimes sin gets in the way, and we do not want to hear what God has to say. Sometimes activities get in the way, and we don't think we have time to feed on the word. Pity. We usually, during those same times, find time to eat three meals a day. We are far more in tune to the wants of our bodies than we are to the needs of our spirit.

The answer is: when you do not long for the milk of the word to satisfy your spiritual thirst, that is the time you need it most. On those occasions, you need a spiritual mother or father or brother or sister to walk alongside you and see that you partake of that which is necessary to sustain your faith. Don't wait for the hunger to return. So long as you avoid contact with the word, you can convince yourself that you don't need it or have time for it. All the while, you are growing spiritually anemic. The word is what gives you the capacity to believe God. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and faith comes by hearing; hearing by the word of God. Teach that diligently to those you mentor. Otherwise, their lives will become like roller-coasters, taking in the word for a while, then avoiding it or ignoring it as though it were a bonus you tack on when you feel like it, trying to live on the fumes of the faith they acquired when they were taking it in as God intended.

It is the source of your nourishment in Christ. It is the milk that feeds your soul. It is the nutrient that generates faith, the

very faith that allows you to believe, the faith that so pleases the heart of God. It is not an option. It is the source of your very life in Christ. Teach that to those you give your life to. And teach them from a life that is overflowing with the very truth you are teaching.

5- What is written about the word is man's commentary. What is written in the word is God's commandment. Don't ever confuse the two. Paul commended the Berean Christians in Acts, chapter 17. Remember? He said of them:

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

—These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

(Acts 17:10,11)

The word “received” means “to take hold of”. The word “readiness” means “with zeal”. The word “searched” means to “investigate thoroughly”. So the passage says: “The Bereans were wiser than the those in Thessalonica because they took hold of the word with zeal and diligently, every day, investigated the Scriptures to verify if what they were being taught was really true.”

The danger of “spoon-fed” Christianity is that, in an effort to avoid having to dig for ourselves, we will simply let others do it for us. Once we fall into that trap, we unconsciously accept what they say as though it were on equal footing with the word itself. Three things happen, and none of them are good:

- 1- *We set ourselves up to accept heresy and not even know it.*
- 2- *We don't learn the process of searching the Scriptures for ourselves.*
- 3- *We rob God of what He could teach us as the Holy Spirit takes the word and speaks directly to us and the needs we have.*

The bottom line is that we eventually “develop itching ears” as the Scripture calls it. We run from place to place or church to church or person to person looking for some new doctrine or some new exciting presentation to satisfy our need to be taught. In the process, not being Bereans, we take whatever someone

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says (if it sounds exciting and different) and we treat it as though it were a word from God. It may be. But we'd better be sure. And the only way to be sure is to go back to the Book ourselves and check it out.

Most cults get their footing in just this way. Someone with a gift for moving audiences casts a spell with his or her personality and begins to get a following. To keep that following, they develop doctrines that tickle the ears or challenge the mind, and often sound a lot like what Scripture teaches. Their followers take those doctrines as though they were from the word itself, without checking it out. Then that teacher or preacher builds another doctrine on top of the first one. And then another. Before long, you can't tell what came from the word and what came from the preacher. Soon, so confused are they, that he can tell them God wants them to run off to an island and kill themselves or barricade themselves in a house because God is going to do this or that.

Only a few get caught up in those webs of deceit, perhaps, but on a much larger scale, all of us tend to take what we read in the latest book by a seemingly respected author as though it were true, without checking it out. It seems particularly true in our day. Or we turn to a commentary or a new translation and take what it says without checking it out first. Or we read what the publisher has written in the margin and assume it to be true because it is printed on the same page as the written word. Don't do that. Be a Berean. And teach those you mentor to take what you say, what I say, and what anyone else says and run it back through the grid of the word itself. Remember. The Bible will never contradict itself. It is its own best commentary. Get a good concordance and use the word as your professor to verify itself. It is a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your pathway. And, praise God, the lamp never goes out. The light never gets dim. And the word never fails to confirm itself by itself.

Let the word be its own authority. It needs no editing from us. We must not seek to reduce it to fit society's standards, or add to it to make it say what it doesn't. It is perfect. It is complete. It is enough. It says about itself:

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.

(Proverbs 30:5,6)

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It also says:

Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:1,2)

Scripture does not need to be a launching pad, but a landing strip. It is not something we use to sprinkle truth into a worldly recipe to give it flavor or validity. The Scripture is the final, complete word of God to man, and it cannot be bent to suit our needs. John 10 tells us:

I and my Father are one.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

(John 10:30-37)

The Scripture cannot be broken. It cannot be added to. It cannot be altered to become acceptable to a new generation. Be careful as you buy new translations of the Scripture. Look at the spiritual credentials of those who did the work. Check key passages that deal with the blood of Jesus Christ and the work of the Cross and be sure that words are not being interpreted rather than translated. No Scripture is of any private interpretation. Teach that without apology to those who walk alongside you. It could be the words about the word that make a difference in their ministries years down the road.

6- The word of God is the source of the Christian's joy.

Downtrodden believers are usually believers who have ceased meditating on the word of God. The Scripture says of itself:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. (Jeremiah 15:16)

The word of God was the prophet's main course and his dessert. As Job said:

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. (Job 23:12)

The result? Jeremiah says he was filled with joy. Feeding on the word lifts the spirits, renews the hope, refocuses the heart on things eternal. Feeding on the word lifts the believer into the heavens to see the nature of God, rather than wallowing in the circumstances of earth that caused the depression. Look at I Thessalonians chapter 1,

We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: (I Thessalonians 1:2-6)

How could that be? How could the word in the midst of great suffering bring joy? What a godly formula:

(Trouble + Scripture = Joy)

Psalm 119 reminds us:

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. (Psalm 119:67)

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. (Psalm 119:71)

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I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou
in faithfulness hast afflicted me. (Psalm 119:75)

I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according
unto thy word. (Psalm 119:107)

The affliction drives us to the word. The word draws us to see life from God's perspective, and the result is joy: "that quiet confidence in God that is actually multiplied when the natural reasons for happiness decline". The problem is: when we are afflicted, we are, at that time, the least likely to turn to the word. Most of us would rather wallow in self-pity first, murmur to others second, and only turn to the word when forced to. But the word is our lamp. It alone can illuminate the life and shed light on the eternal value of this earthly pain and suffering. Look how the writer of Hebrews wrote of our Savior and the Cross:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;
who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,
despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of
the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus fulfilled the Father's word by going to the Cross. From a human perspective, it was the worst possible scenario. From His perspective, even though it meant momentary separation from the Father, even though it would cause Him to cry out: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" even though it would mean the sinless one tasting sin, and no one has suffered in any way as He did, for no one has ever been more undeserving of suffering than He was. He endured the pain for the joy that was set before Him.

That joy was in His vision because He was in perfect harmony with His Father's word. He did not speak a word that did not come from His Father. He was the Living Word. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life. Yet He tasted death for the joy that was set before Him.

That kind of joy awaits us, even in our tribulation, but it is the process of being totally immersed in His word that releases it. As you meditate on His promises, the darkness begins to evaporate. The "Son" begins to break through. The heavenly reasons for your earthly trials begin to blossom before your eyes. And all because you have entered into the joy of the Lord by spending time in the word of the Lord.

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John wrote:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.
(I John 1:3,4)

Those we mentor need to understand and we need to understand that the balance in the Christian life is obtained by staying in the word of God. The Psalmists so often began their writings by stating their complaints, naming their enemies, crying out to God for any kind of help at all. They seemed devoid of joy, filled with hopelessness. Then something happened. They would turn their eyes heavenward, and what God had said and done before began to penetrate their hearts. Suddenly, anthems of joy began to ring forth from the pages of their diaries. They were entering into the joy of the Lord.

So can you. So can I. It is simply a matter of choice. And how can this book take a broken heart and fill it full of joy? How can this book actually take and infuse a life with faith, allowing someone to believe something he cannot see and trust someone he cannot touch?

I think we know the answer. It is not a book. Books can't produce joy. Books can't produce faith. Books are words on paper, expressing the thoughts of finite men and women who suffer the same problems you do, and whose souls have the same weaknesses yours do. Even books written by godly men and women cannot produce faith or joy. No, this word we hold in our hands is not a book. Praise God. It is a Living Word. Within its every page rest millions of expressions of the nature of God waiting to be personally mailed Air Express to that part of your heart where it can lodge and perform the task of a spiritual miracle. It will forever change your perspective and forever change your life. May those you mentor understand that. Yea, may those you mentor believe that. Thus, may those you mentor let that happen.

Then they, indeed, will have something to pass on, as well.

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A Challenge to Further Study and Application

1- What conclusions have you come to about a growing respect for the word of God in your life? Is it increasing daily? yearly? If not, what do you plan to do about it?

2- Why is the perfectness of God's word and His unlimited guarantee so profound?

3- Have you asked God to give you the wisdom to use the word of God as an offensive weapon in your spiritual battles daily? Has He done that? What has been the result?

4- How can the word actually create faith? Can you give a personal example?

5- How would you go about interviewing someone who wanted to go to the mission field? What would be your primary criteria? How would you go about measuring their confidence in the word? Would you qualify?

6- What happens when a baby doesn't get its milk? What happens when a believer doesn't get the milk of the word?

7- Why is it such a temptation to take the words of man about the word and equate them with the word itself? Have you done that? What can you do to become a Berean Christian?

8- Have you noticed that your joy diminishes when your time in God's word diminishes? Why do you not run back to the word when it does? What place does tribulation or affliction play in our running to the word?

9- Ask God this week to give you His perspective of His word. Thank Him in advance for doing so.

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