

Influence 2022 Pt. 6

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, June 26, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us! Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream, you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you desire. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SUMMATIONS & RECAP PT. 1

In recent weeks we have identified three levels of influential relationship that should be present in our lives.....

1) Mentee Relationship – Relationships in which we allow other people to pour into and influence our lives. Connections in which we serve as students or proteges in relation to worthy mentor figures. In this context, we are the influenced.

2) Mentor Relationship – Relationships in which we are allowed to pour into and/or influence others. Connections in which we serve as the mentor to proteges, wherein we serve as figures of impact. In this context, we are the influencer.

3) Mutual Relationship – Peers for the journey characterized by interdependent connection. In this scenario, there is a mutual degree of influence.

Q. To what degree are these levels of relationship present in your life?

KEY – Let us continue to hone in on the MENTOR relationship in particular. Let us delve in...

SUMMATIONS & RECAP PT. 2

NOTE 1 – Two weeks ago we noted that every believer is called to the work of mentorship since we are called to make disciples. Thus, we all have a significant role in the work of spiritually cultivating others! Consider afresh and anew the G. Commission of Jesus Christ, which is both timeless and timely in its application...

Matthew 28:16–20 (NIV)

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

NOTE 2 – What have you to contribute to this work? What can you invest in those within your personal orbit? We noted that you can impart the following: **a)** what you know to be true of Scripture (e.g., born of personal study, previously-heard sermons or readings); **b)** testimony based upon personal experience; and **c)** the power of prayer. Each of you has so much to offer! Thus said...

TRANSITIONS

Q1. What keeps a great many from participating in mentorship (i.e., “disciple-making”)?

Q2. What obstacles hinder people from personally engaging in this Commission of Christ?

KEY – Let us take some time to respond to these questions with the following answers. Consider...

#1 – IGNORANCE

I believe many are disengaged in the work of mentorship or making disciples simply due to IGNORANCE...

NOTE 1 – Could it be that many fail to participate in the Great Commission because they know nothing of it? Of course, you may be asking: “Pastor, how could believers know nothing of this command of the Lord?” Great question! I am so glad that you asked! I would offer the following in reply...

NOTE 2 – Firstly, ours is the most biblically-illiterate generation in U.S. history. Though we have every tool necessary to both access and understand Scripture (i.e., paper and digital resources), many simply never take the time to actually read it. Since the Bible is not learned through osmosis, we remain ignorant.

QUOTE – “Christians claim to believe the Bible is God's Word. We claim it's God's divinely inspired, inerrant message to us. Yet despite this, we aren't reading it. A recent LifeWay Research study found only 45 percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Over 40 percent of the people attending read their Bible occasionally, maybe once or twice a month. Almost 1 in 5 churchgoers say they never read the Bible. . . . Because we don't read God's Word, it follows that we don't know it.”

NOTE 3 – Secondly, a great many pulpits have turned ineffectual or wayward. In other words, the people of God may not know of the Great Commission of Christ because pastors are not prioritizing it in their preaching! I was taught by my former pastor that you get what you preach. What happens when churches en masse fail to address biblical discipleship or mentorship? Simply put, you get neither!

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6 . . . my people are destroyed [perish] from lack of knowledge.

#2 – FAULTY PERSPECTIVE(S)

I believe many are disengaged in mentorship or making disciples due to faulty beliefs or perspectives...

KEY – Our words, actions and deeds are the overflow of what we believe. This is why proper theology matters, for what you believe about the Lord and His ways shapes your daily life and living! Thus said, I believe the Church, in general, maintains two crippling beliefs as it relates to the topic of mentorship...

1) Ministry is the Work of the Pastor and/or Elite Leaders

NOTE 1 – There are a great many who believe the work of reaching the lost and making disciples is the work of a sacred class of clergy or professionally-trained individuals. In other words, the work of the ministry is the responsibility of the minister(s)! This perverts sound biblical teaching...

Ephesians 4:11–13

11 Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service [i.e., for the work of ministry], so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

NOTE 2 – It’s not the work of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher to do the work of the ministry (i.e., as though they were solely liable before Christ to advance the kingdom of God). Rather, it is their function to train-up the people of God to perform Christ-centered ministry in the earth! Note again...

Ephesians 4:11–13 (Emphasis Mine)

11 Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 **to equip his people for works of service [i.e., for the work of ministry]**, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

2) Ministry Only Happens on “Holy Ground”

NOTE 1 – Far too many see the church building and property as the only place where true discipleship occurs. As much as I love and support the ministry that takes place within these four walls, our greatest potential for ministry resides beyond them.

NOTE 2 – Stop looking to 60 Main St. South Barre as your primary place to impact others. Rather, look to your own living room, dinner table, car or local coffee shop. Your greatest ministry will never happen within these walls but beyond them as you “GO” into all the world to make Christ known. You don’t have the keys to get in the building anyway, so look outwardly!

NOTE 3 – Some of Jesus’ greatest moments of impact did not happen in a religious setting, but in the midst of life and living. He did not set up shop and demand people come to Him. Rather, He went to them and turned every human context into a context for discipleship...

Matthew 5:1–2 (Prelude or Intro to the Sermon on the Mount)

1 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them.

Q. Do you realize Jesus gave the most famous sermon ever on a mountain v. a pulpit?

NOTE 4 – Some of greatest moments of impact in the Early Church did not happen in a religious setting, but in the highways-and-byways of life. Paul did some of his best discipleship from a prison cell v. a sacred location! Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch by the roadside and had impact (cf. Acts 8)!

Q. Am I discounting, demeaning or diminishing the church?

A. By no means! Yet the best work of the Church will often occur outside of one!

#3 – PERSONAL DISQUALIFICATION

I believe many are disengaged from mentorship because they view themselves improperly...

NOTE 1 – I posit that many live with, what I call, a Ministry of Disqualification. They genuinely believe that God could never use someone like them (i.e., that they have nothing to contribute and/or have no right to expect to be utilized by the Lord). Sadly, many deem this humility when it is simply another manifestation of pride (i.e., What is the focus? SELF). To utilize a sports analogy...

NOTE 2 – Far too many in the Church of Christ bench themselves while the Coach is calling them onto the field!

Q1. Who sold you on the idea that God could not use you?

Q2. Why, precisely, did you believe their words over His Word?

Q3. Why magnify your shortcomings over His capacity and power?

NOTE 3 – When I survey the whole of Scripture, I see the most unlikely of people used of God to affect change.

KEY – Consider the following from a selection entitled, “The March of the Unqualified” ...

ILL – “Think God can’t use you? Think he only uses perfectly qualified people? Take a closer look. Moses was not a great speaker. Jonah ran from God. Jacob was a liar. Noah got drunk. Rahab was a prostitute. David had an affair. Jeremiah was depressed, a lot. Solomon was rich in wisdom but poor in lifestyle. John the Baptist was just plain poor. Timothy was too young. Abraham was too old. Lazarus was dead. Sarah was barren. Naomi was a widow. Gideon and Thomas both doubted; so did Sarah. Peter lacked self-control. James and John were self-righteous. Paul had a short fuse. Well, so did Peter and Moses. Actually, lots of people did. God’s army isn’t perfect. It never has been. It’s the march of the unqualified, so get in line.”

Q. Does this mean it is permissible to adopt sinful lifestyles?

A. Of course not! It does mean that God can use anyone; even us...

NOTE 4 – The people who frighten me as a leader are those who deem themselves competent in themselves...

2 Corinthians 12:7b–10

7 . . . in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

#4 – TIME

I believe many are disengaged in mentorship or making disciples due to a perceived lack of time...

NOTE 1 – Time is a precious commodity that no one seems to have enough of. You may be thinking to yourself as you listen to this message, “Pastor, I do not have time to pour into others. With all I have on my plate, I cannot take any more on!” May I ask...

Q1. Have you ever genuinely sought the Lord concerning the investment of your time and priorities?

Q2. Have you ever considered that maybe there are some things on your plate that do not need to be?

NOTE 2 – Ultimately, God is the type of God who calls us to do things we can do in Christ, but we may have to make necessary adjustment(s) in kind. After all, Christianity is learning to live with a new center of gravity! Thus, some change is to be expected. Perhaps, for you, how you spend your time, needs to be adjusted to make time for what matters to Him! Consider the following...

Ephesians 5:15–17

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

Psalms 90:12

12 Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

NOTE 3 – I am not going to lie! Pouring into others will require the investment of time, effort and energy. However, let me note that this is often something that you can engage in “in the midst of” daily life and living. Allow me to put forth the following questions...

Q1. Do you ever have breakfast, lunch or dinner? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

Q2. Do you ever have to run errands and take a drive? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

Q3. Do you ever make time to run to Dunkin D’s. for coffee? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

Q4. Do you have hobbies and interests you can share w/ others? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

Q4. Do you have particular skills and/or capacities to share w/ others? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

Q5. Do you ever attend “Bible Study” or a church “small group”? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

Q6. Do you have a home or the ability for hospitality? INVITE SOMEONE ALONG

ONCE AGAIN...

KEY – Your greatest investments will likely never happen at the church. Rather, it will be in the midst of living!

#5 – FEAR

I believe many are disengaged in mentorship or making disciples due to an underlying fear of vulnerability...

NOTE 1 – Many are hesitant to “let someone in” for fear the other person might see the real them. Many do not want others to see past their church-approved mask, for fear they might be rejected, judged or perceived differently. Can I be honest with you? People genuinely crave authenticity!

NOTE 2 – Consider that Christ invited His own into the “ugly” moments of life and living...

Matthew 26:36–38 (Gethsemane)

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

NOTE 3 – Consider that Paul was open regarding his past, struggles, and beyond...

Philippians 3:4b–9 (Paul Noting He at One Time Trusted in ALL the Wrong Things)

4 . . . If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Philippians 3:10–14 (Paul is Noting He Had Not ARRIVED, Emphasis Mine)

10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:15 (Consider His SELF-DESCRIPTION, Emphasis Mine)

15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

Q. If Paul was willing to practice vulnerability in light of his past and shortcomings, why can’t we?

FINAL WORDS

We have noted much re: mentorship and our role in fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ...

NOTE 1 – However, I would be remiss if I failed to touch upon the joy of investing in other people in the Lord. There is nothing like being used of God to serve, bless, and pour into the lives of others! This was a joy that the apostle Paul noted in his writings. Consider how Paul viewed his proteges, students and mentees...

Philippians 4:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my **joy** and crown, stand firm in the Lord in . . . dear friends!

1 Thessalonians 2:19–20 (Emphasis Mine)

19 For what is our hope, our **joy**, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? 20 Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

Q1. Who is your “joy” in the Lord?

Q2. Who is your “glory” in the Lord?

Q3. Who is your “crown” in the Lord?

NOTE 2 – There are candidates all around you! Open your eyes and let God speak to your heart and mind. It is the will of Christ for you to faithfully and effectively engage in the mission He has set before us. Get to work and watch what He can do both in and through you!

NOTE 3 – Finally, there is a joy in experiencing the presence of Christ in mission...

Matthew 28:18–20 (Emphasis Mine)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**”

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting this local work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Please check out the website for the calendar of upcoming events and more.

NOTE 3 – Feel free to join us downstairs for a time of coffee, refreshments and more! POTLUCK...

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.