

## CHAPTER V

### CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL *FOLLOWERSHIP*

#### **Keith Anderson and Randy Reese**

One of the most specific author teams that document *followership* in the context of spiritual mentoring is Anderson and Reese. They speak to an “imitative faith” where Jesus’ call to “follow Me” may seem like a simple invitation and description of the Christian’s way of life, but “this simple command assumes a complex relationship through which one becomes educated for the reign of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Anderson and Reese cite the stretch for each gospel Christian, because once the disciples of Christ respond and follow their Saviour; then, they must prepare to continue *followership* by making other followers. That stretch is illustrated by the heart cry of the Ethiopian when replying to Philip’s question: “Understandest thou what thou readest?” The Ethiopian then explained that he needed help: “How can I [understand], except some man should guide me?” (Acts 8:30, 31). Therefore, if Christ’s disciples today are to imitate Him, they must respond to every similar request for *followership* in order to guide as a spiritual mentor.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson and Reese, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 17.

Speaking more directly to “followership,” Anderson and Reese mention the great cloud of witnesses from Hebrews 11 and 12 who call to us even from their modeling of *followership*. The authors state that “discipleship is always practiced by those who come after Jesus through a long line of others who followed Him before we did.”<sup>1</sup> The authors continue with an appeal to “follow these companions of the past, for no one comes to faith alone; we come to faith as we follow those who followed at an earlier time.”<sup>2</sup> Some obvious factors that would foster *followership* of Jesus are obedience to the call, vision to perceive multiplication of followers, guidance of followers, and modeling of the faith of Jesus.

From here Anderson and Reese identify numerous spiritual mentors or directors of past Christian history that have made contributions worthy for emulation. Some of these are Madame Jeanne Guyon, Augustine, Aelred of Rievaulx, John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich, Ignatius of Loyola, and Teresa of Avila. These spiritual mentors depict *followership* factors such as beginning well, partnership with the Holy Spirit, listening, modeling, purposive, relationship of trust, teachability, accountability, and empowerment.<sup>3</sup>

### Henry and Tom Blackaby

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson and Reese, 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 59.

Henry and Tom Blackaby have recommended a glimpse of *followership* in their Christian classic on companionship. From the life of the Apostle Paul and his companions can be found some instruction regarding his followers. This writer has drawn some factors that foster *followership* from Blackabys' volume, even though the primary emphasis is companionship.

Though the authors' primary focus comes from the standpoint of Paul's companions supporting him in his ministry, missionary journeys, and even imprisonment, the "second fiddle"<sup>1</sup> position that those companions played made the apostles' efforts much more successful. In addition, the Blackabys do not refer to *followership*. However, what they do say blends into a form of *followership* which speaks volumes about the contribution a mentee or protégé makes to the leader. Support and encouragement are major factors of significance for the mentor in a relationship with a mentee. And, though Blackabys do not present this point, some of those companions of Paul later became mentors themselves. So, Paul was replicating his companions from followers to leaders. The Holy Spirit was using Paul's efforts to expand and multiply the kingdom of heaven.

Interestingly, the word for *companion* comes from the Greek, *su, zugo* (syzugos), which translates to *yokefellow* (see Phil 4:3). Blackabys offer a further definition: "people harnessed together, complementing one another, and pulling with a common purpose and goal,"<sup>2</sup> a definition that sounds similar to factors that foster *followership*.

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Blackaby and Tom Blackaby, *Anointed to be God's Servants* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), xi.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, xii.

Blackabys recognize that Jesus had twelve companions that followed Him, as the ultimate leader, and these were essentially appointed by God in close relationship with the Saviour.<sup>1</sup> And furthermore, the authors note that the Father sent the Holy Spirit to be the special dispensation of a heavenly companion to the disciples when Jesus left, meaning to “give you another Counselor” (John 14:16-18) as a companion called to come alongside as a “helper or advocate.”<sup>2</sup>

The Blackabys offer several examples of companions who gave each other support, like Aquila and Priscilla, who were “fellow workers” with Paul.<sup>3</sup> And they recognize George Mueller and J. Hudson Taylor as being companions. They continue with the example of brothers, John and Charles Wesley, who worked together in evangelism. This writer sees what the Blackabys state as “God has deliberately designed His people to be interdependent<sup>4</sup> upon one another in His kingdom” as a crucial factor for fostering *followership* in the spiritual mentoring relationship. It may not always work out that companions or those in the mentor-mentee partnership become friends (i.e., the challenge with John Mark and Paul, though there was later healing of friendship), but the interdependent factor illustrates what many authors have attempted to convey in developing *followership* in the context of spiritual mentoring.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Blackaby and Blackaby, xii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., xv.

<sup>5</sup>Cohen, 120.

Of all the times when a network of interdependence is important it would be when a leader or follower of Christ [mentor or mentee] faces suffering. One can support and lift the other. Paul at one time hammered the church with persecution before his conversion, but later became interdependent upon Christ and His followers for support. Interestingly, Saul went to Damascus to arrest and imprison disciples of Christ, but eventually became dependent upon the very ones he intended to imprison.<sup>1</sup>

There were other circumstances that Blackabys quote when Paul's "colleagues, companions, fellow workers, and fellow believers 'formed a circle around him,' whether it was through prayer, sending money for his needs, opening their homes to him, caring for his wounds, or just by living lives that demonstrated the power of God in them."<sup>2</sup> The apostle conceivably was experiencing the interdependent factor of *followership* from his converts.

Ultimately, the choicest Companion is Jesus Christ, for He promises to be with His followers no matter what fate awaits our life on this earth. Jesus is the greatest interdependent Presence for His followers, as He was for Paul when he faced serious times in Corinth: "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18:9,10)<sup>3</sup>

### **Robert Clinton and Paul Stanley**

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<sup>1</sup>Blackaby and Blackaby, 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 13.

This professor (Clinton) for Fuller Theological Seminary and administrator (Stanley) for the Navigators organization have co-authored a dynamic book that also refers to *followership* from a relational point of view. They offer their definition as: “Mentoring is a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources.”<sup>1</sup> One may sense immediately from their definition that this author duo cares about people and empowering them as factors in *followership*.<sup>2</sup>

Clinton and Stanley have recommended three major types of mentoring, 1) the intensive type or function of discipler, spiritual guide, and coach; 2) the occasional type or function of counselor, teacher, and sponsor; and 3) the passive type or function of both the contemporary and historical emulation models.<sup>3</sup>

These three mentoring types (intensive, occasional, and passive) spread out the *followership* factors over a timing spectrum that could happen regularly (intensive), infrequently (occasional), or tangentially (passive). For instance, among the intensive types, the discipler-mentor would attract followers because of his/her enablement. The spiritual guide would draw mentorees (authors’ word) based upon his/her help with accountability, direction, and insight for questions. The coach would motivate, instruct in specific skills, and help with applied tasks and challenges.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Clinton and Stanley, 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

In the occasional type of *followership*, the counselor would offer timely advice and appropriate perceptions of self, others, circumstances, and ministry. The teacher would offer knowledge and understanding of a specific subject. The sponsor would give career guidance and safely instruct a potential leader through organizational moves.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, in the passive type of *followership*, the contemporary and historical models would exhibit and exemplify living personal models to emulate as well as past life values that would teach lessons and principles.<sup>2</sup>

Clinton and Stanley have displayed a wide-angle view of *followership*, prescribing three vital and dynamic factors that pull followers toward a mentor. They enumerate these dynamic characteristics as attraction, responsiveness, and accountability.<sup>3</sup>

### **Howard and William Hendricks**

Writing from a gold mine of experience with the added enthusiasm of youthful energy, this father-son team has co-authored a biblically rich book on men mentoring other men.<sup>4</sup> The biblical principle that “iron sharpens iron” and “so one man sharpens another” (Prov.27:17) defines the value of this material from the Hendricks. Their biblical and Christ-centered focus illustrates that they do not major in minors, but see the great

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<sup>1</sup>Clinton and Stanley, 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>4</sup>Hendricks and Hendricks, 10. They don't apologize for speaking only to men in this book, but plan material for publication later for ladies.

principles of scripture motivating one-on-one relationships with men. In fact a powerful passage from Paul to the Corinthians underscores the central purpose of the Hendricks' burden for *followership*: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).<sup>1</sup> In other words, in the context of spiritual mentoring, *followership* of another human mentor breeds value only as long as it leads to Jesus Christ.

The Hendricks record a conversation with a boy at the barber shop. “Hey, son, when you grow up, whom do you want to be like?” That boy looked Hendricks straight in the eye and said, “Mister, I ain’t found *nobody* I want to be like!”<sup>2</sup> The authors appeal for men to pass along the truth that leads to life in Christ; because “if we want to produce a Timothy, then we need to produce a Paul. And if we want to produce a Paul, then we need to find a Barnabas.”<sup>3</sup> That reasoning is the strong plea of *followership* in this book.

Authors Hendricks further report on what Jesus commanded to the disciples in His gospel commission. Jesus did not command the disciples to “Go and build buildings. He said to go and *build* men, to make disciples—learners—who would follow His ways.” (Matt 28:19)<sup>4</sup>

In discussing spiritual mentoring (making a difference in one’s life), the authors identify two lines that run through every man’s life, a lifeline and a purpose line. They explain that the lifeline records chronological progress; and the purpose line marks

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<sup>1</sup>Hendricks and Hendricks, 110.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 139.

spiritual progress. Then, they ask the *what if* question: What if mentor or mentee makes a mistake? Their answer: “the best teachers are those who have walked the paths of pain and can warn others about staying away from danger.”<sup>1</sup>

So, what additional factors do the Hendricks recommend that would benefit a protégé who desires to follow a mentor? The authors propose these benefits of which they testify that no one has ever regretted giving the process an honest chance: A mentor 1) promotes genuine growth, 2) is a model to follow, 3) helps one efficiently reach goals, 4) plays a key role in God’s pattern for one’s growth, and 5) benefits other people in one’s life.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the authors admit this list is not exhaustive.

To augment the selection process in *followership*, Hendricks suggest these five qualities as being beneficial for working with a mentor?: “1) Everyone of them has been goal-oriented, 2) looking for bigger and better things, 3) an initiator, 4) eager to learn, and 5) responsible in terms of his own development.”<sup>3</sup>

The reader of Hendricks could glean one major insight above all others that these authors contribute to *followership*: “both men gain” from a mentoring partnership. Like Jethro benefited from the legacy brought via Moses to his family in Midian,<sup>4</sup> both the mentor and the protégé can expect to be rewarded from the relationship with each other.

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<sup>1</sup>Hendricks and Hendricks, 152.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 145.

King Solomon volunteers some sage advice: “He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise” (Proverbs 13:20).

### **Brad Johnson and Peter Wilson**

Psychology professors Johnson and Wilson have written an essay entitled, “Core Virtues for the Practice of Mentoring.”<sup>1</sup> Their research study highlights three core virtues for the more experienced individual guiding and teaching a protégé who is less experienced. These virtues are integrity, courage, and care.<sup>2</sup> The authors have demonstrated that each of these three core virtues encompass many other qualities that splay out from these core qualities that involve a protégé who is considering following a mentor. For instance, integrity creates an environment whereby trust, confidence, and comfort may exist in a relationship. Johnson and Wilson explain the importance of “honest expression in relationships”<sup>3</sup> and quote from Merton in particular: “We must learn to say what we really mean in the depths of our souls, not what we think we are expected to say, not what somebody else just said.”<sup>4</sup>

Courage, the second core virtue, comes from the French word, *coeur*, for heart. “To take courage is to take heart versus giving in to fear.”<sup>5</sup> The authors view mentoring as

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<sup>1</sup>Peter F. Wilson and W. Brad Johnson, "Core Virtues for the Practice of Mentoring," *JPT* 29, no. 2 (2001): 121-130.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>4</sup>T. Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1960), 37.

<sup>5</sup>Wilson and Johnson, 126.

a discipline that often requires courageous thinking and actions. Moreover, protégés can procure courage from their mentor counterparts when facing fears that accompany new challenges and demands.<sup>1</sup> Courage deals with having optimism about the future, personal self-confidence, and encouragement for empowerment with the mentee on projects, less worry about mistakes and criticism, and the nurturing of creativity.<sup>2</sup>

Care, the final core virtue, bespeaks of that ultimate facet of love. The authors, in fact, support and equate their three core virtues with Paul's message of love to the Corinthians: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity" (1 Cor 13:13). They see faithfulness, trust, and integrity going together in a cluster of faith; courage blending with hope, and the final facet of care amplified by charity or love. "At the heart of all successful mentor relationships is genuine care and concern for the protégé."<sup>3</sup> Caring is further demonstrated by the mentor in giving time, listening, weathering affliction together, affirming, and communicating value in a consistent way as goals are pursued in partnership.<sup>4</sup>

From Johnson and Wilson's essay on core virtues, this writer has extracted the value of integrity, courage, and care as major factors that foster *followership* in the context of spiritual mentoring, especially impacting the protégé; and yet, admittedly the mentor will also be acutely aware of these crucial ingredients in the mix of mentoring.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson and Johnson, 126.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

### Brian Jones and Linda Phillips-Jones

This writer finds the Joneses' Christ-centered approach to *followership* refreshing. Foundational to their research is a focus on Jesus Christ, though not leaving out other applicable mentoring teams in scripture as illustrations. In an earlier book Phillips-Jones communicated how Jesus changed her life dramatically. As a result she scripted, "the most powerful help a mentor can give is still to believe in the individual and to encourage him or her to succeed."<sup>1</sup>

Based upon the Joneses' new material, one could believe from the above statement that as the Best Mentor ever, Jesus certainly would believe in those He mentored. Accordingly, that factor would multiply the trust, devotion, and commitment of the disciple or follower of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

In their new materials the above authors hold up Jesus as the "Master Mentor."<sup>3</sup> They cite multiple factors of Jesus' approach to mentoring His disciples and followers:

- Jesus saw *potential* in those He mentored, but not necessarily expected ready-to-serve success (Matt 9:12).

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<sup>1</sup>Linda Phillips-Jones, *The New Mentors and Protégés* (Grass Valley, CA: Coalition of Counseling Centers, 1993), 7.

<sup>2</sup>G. Brian Jones and Linda Phillips-Jones, *How to Develop an Effective Mentoring Partnership*, Workbook ed., Christ-Centered Mentoring (Grass Valley, CA: Coalition of Counseling Centers, Inc., 2002), 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

- Jesus reached out to *multiple* followers even beyond the twelve, including Cleopas, Nathanael, Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 24:18; John 1:49; John 3:16; John 19:38).
- Jesus mentored *one-on-one* and in *groups* (John 13:23).
- Jesus also mentored *women* (Luke 8:2).
- Jesus *observed* and *listened attentively* (Luke 21:5-7).
- Jesus *inspired* His followers (Matt 4:19).
- Jesus used powerful *teaching* (Acts 4:13).
- Jesus gave *corrective feedback* (Matt 20:22).
- Jesus helped them *prepare for future risks* (Luke 21:16,17).
- Jesus provided them with opportunities to *excel* (Matt 10:5; 28:18,19).
- Jesus *stimulated trust* (John 11:25).
- Jesus *encouraged them* (Matt 5:13, 14; 8:10; 10:31; 15:28).
- Jesus *communicated a vision and His goal* (Matt 6:19-21).
- Jesus *gave them authority, commissioned, and empowered them* (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:14-19; Matt 28:19).<sup>1</sup>

In contradistinction to our present discussion, when a reader reflects upon the absence of mentors in scriptural instances, he/she finds such to be a loss. For example, King Saul could have had the Prophet Samuel as a mentor, but refused and lost his life. Samson could also have had a mentor, but went solo into his life of seduction and

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<sup>1</sup>Jones and Phillips-Jones, 11-15.

imprisonment. Gideon and Jonah for lack of a mentor, also lost time, self-esteem, and direction.

The Joneses add various factors that mentors and mentees would find attractive in the “psychosocial and career functions”<sup>1</sup> of *followership*. But the greatest of these for this writer has to be Jesus and His influence on His followers as the Master Mentor.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson and Johnson, 128.