

June 16, 2013 - Protégé

I found it interesting this morning, maybe it's just me because I'm speaking, but there's been a lot mentioned about the influence of fathers on the lives of younger people around them. I want to say personally, that I am very grateful for that. I would also like to include mothers in the mix, at the risk of stepping on Father's Day. I'd like to thank all of you who have had influence on the lives on the children, the teenagers, the young adults in this congregation. It has been a joy for me to work with them over the past ten or so months. I want to introduce the message this morning with that thank you because, this morning we are discussing the 'Spiced' series. This is a series that Mike has been taking us through about people in our lives that influence us. This morning's message is about the 'Protégé'. The Protégé is that person who is influenced intentionally by another person. Michael hit us next week with who that other person is and I think, if you follow along today, you'll probably catch it because, the Protégé and the Mentor.

A few years ago, I was in Calgary and I was visiting for a reason and that reason was to get English as a second language certification. That was a bit of a divergence from the career path that people might have expected me to be on. While I was there, I met with a man who came alongside me in my third year of Bible College. We had a meeting, we hung out and he was driving me home and as we pulled up to the place where I was staying, I'm just about to open the door to his, rather cluttered, Honda CRV and he turns to me and he said, "Craig! You are a Christian leader and someday you will be leading in God's Church." That man was Ron Fraser, the President of Alberta Bible College at the time. Like a guy with a box on his head, in my third year of school, I was asking God "What am I here for? What am I doing? I know you have gifted me in leadership but I'm kind of in a cloud, I don't know where you are taking me." And so, I asked Ron if he might consider being my Mentor for the year. He took me up on that, and I'm grateful that he did. Over that year he met with me once a month and that decision that he made to allow me into his life, and to share his life with me, still influences my life today. When I'm in a fog, when I had hair (laughter) I'm not sure what he would say about this, by the way, he doesn't know it's happened, but when I'm in a place of confusion, when I'm stressed, when I have questions, I can go to Ron and the insight that he offers me, maybe it's just something about the wisdom that comes with losing your hair, hopefully not like I did; but that wisdom and that influence is so...valuable to me. It is one of the ways that God chooses to speak into my life. I am no longer surprised when I get a phone call or an e-mail from Ron and he's got something that he wants to bounce off of me. It still amazes me that I am who I am and he has gone on the journey that he has gone on, and he's got titles behind his name and he's now Dr. Ron Fraser, he's got a Doctor Degree! But he takes the time to type out an e-mail and chooses his words and sends them in my direction, for my thoughts on something. It blows my mind! It's all about the mentor investing in the protégé and I never ever, used that word to describe myself until Mike said "Craig this is what you're talking on." I wouldn't consider myself a protégé in any...I mean, I just wouldn't consider that. The influence that Ron has is amazing to me. That's what a mentor does for the protégé. That person sees the protégé as an individual not

just another face in the crowd. That person enters into a relationship that's vulnerable; a relationship that where there is no fear of you seeing the weakness. Often times we look at people and we go "Wow! I'll never be like that person. I don't even know if I could have a conversation with that person. That person intimidates me." But, that person is a person and as people who want to grow in our relationship with God, it does wonders to be able to realize that and invite ourselves into their lives. Maybe a little forcefully, maybe with a little bit of effort, but to invite ourselves in, knowing that that person can be used by God to change us. The mentor sees the protégé as a person to invest in who will carry on a living legacy that that person wants to leave behind. The influence will carry on as God works in the life of the protégé, something of the mentor transitions, something of the mentor is passed on. Hopefully, it's the good things that get passed on and that's how we see God's Kingdom grow, that's how we see it because, we're all part of the Body of Christ, and so, as we are growing the Body is growing, the light is shining, God's glory is showing.

Someone has said: "In a sense, we are all protégé's who have much to learn and much to teach. We can either help those who are behind us or seek help from those who are ahead of us. Along the way we'll watch the Kingdom grow in our midst." That's our choice. We reflected on the cross. We reflected on how the Father sent the son and the son had a mission to accomplish and as he accomplished that mission, he brought twelve guys alongside him. Of those twelve he had three that he connected with more intimately. That's God's heart. That's God's heart to all of us. God wants to use people in our lives in intimate ways, to change us.

Here is where I dare to get a little challenging and hopefully it comes across in a gentle way. I have a string of questions here that I'd like for us to reflect on because, you may be someone's mentor and not even know it.

Has someone invested in you? Has someone come alongside you? Has someone stood behind you and supported you? Has someone taken your hand and led you on? If a name comes to mind, breathe a prayer simply and quickly to God, simply saying, "Thanks". Be encouraged that God has invested in that person's life so that person is investing in you. And if you're sitting here and you're like me in my third year of college, and you're going "God! I need help. I can't do this on my own." Take this opportunity now and ask God to put a name in your mind of someone who might invest in you. Mentor Wanted! Imagine if that was vocalized. Imagine if we realized that that influence was available to us and we stepped out and said "Hey! I really appreciate who you are. I appreciate the experiences that God has given you. I appreciate how steadfast you are in your faith. I appreciate how you handled that conflict in your life. I appreciate how you handled those pressures and I need to learn from you. I want to be your protégé. I want our lives to rub up against each other in a way that changes me and encourages you. So if a name comes to mind this morning of someone who has been a protégé for you in your life, or you have been mentored by that person; or you desire to be influenced more by that person; contact that person and say "Thanks, your life means more than you know." That would be a huge encouragement to

them. Or if you're just longing to grow and you see someone and you think "I'd just love to go for coffee with you." Do it! Send a text message. Send an e-mail. Send a Facebook. Announce it somehow. Phone calls are kind of outdated, but I always appreciate a phone call.

God has created us with the ability to influence other people and truthfully, as followers of Jesus, we need that positive influence in our lives. We need it and sometimes we don't want it. Sometimes we think "Man, if that was in my life, I'd have to change and I'm not sure I want to change." And that's where we need to have and allow, God's spirit to work on us. God's spirit to strip away the layers to get to the heart of who we are.

We honestly do a disservice to ourselves, and to others, if we don't look for a protégé or look for a mentor. That's a hard thing to think about but, knowing how God has created us, as a relational people to glorify him in relationship with each other, it actually is a disservice, it actually slows the growth of who we are and the Body of Christ.

So then, who is influencing you and who are you influencing? This phrase has been ringing in my head as I've been thinking about this message and I hope it sticks. "Intentional influence is an invaluable investment in the life of another." Invaluable because it has the potential to bring transformation from God and that is worth more than anything, because the Holy Spirit bears fruit in our lives and he can use other people to prune; he can use other people to nourish; he can use other people to support and that fruit will continue to grow as we connect with people.

So maybe you're saying "That's all good Craig! I'm glad you're able to share that but...how does it happen in a busy, crazy, technological, entertain me world? How do you have time to have that kind of relationship with people?" The only thing that comes into my mind, and it hits me pretty hard, is "Have to make it a priority." But, God hasn't left us to fend for ourselves to figure this out on our own. There's a guy in the Bible you're pretty familiar with. Pretty popular story. His name is Saul. Not the King Saul from the Old Testament, but Saul who became Paul. He gave us, God gave us this example in a pretty incredible way. Before Saul's dramatic life change; when he encountered Christ; he was a protégé. He was Gamaliel's protégé. In Acts 22: 3-4, this is what it says. Paul is standing on the steps of the Temple, he's up on these steps and he's giving his defence, because the religious leaders are coming at him and accusing him of causing all kinds of trouble. He's trying to defend himself and here is what he says:

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a City in Cecilia and I was brought up and educated here, in Jerusalem, under Gamaliel."

He name drops! Using the name of someone else who has influence to support your cause. So he says: "I was educated under this guy and at his feet I learned to follow our Jewish laws and customs very carefully. I became very zealous to honour God in everything I did,

just as all of you are today and I persecuted the followers of The Way. Pounding some to death; binding and delivering both men and women to prison.”

So he says to the Jewish leaders: You’re coming at me because I’m causing trouble, I’m not in agreement with how you’re doing things. The reality is, I sat under one of the most prominent names in your sect. I sat under a guy that, they would use the word ‘Rabi’ for that personal influence. My master; my teacher, right? They would use the word ‘Raban’ as a higher more significant name, that means, OUR Master, OUR teacher. And this Gamaliel, he was OUR master and so, Paul says “I sat under his tutelage; I learned from him; I walked with him; I studied what he studied.” Paul’s great zeal for the Law first, and then for Christ after his conversion, I think that zeal was rooted in the influence that his mentor had on his life. Paul’s love for truth and his exhaustive understanding of the scriptures, is very likely attributed to that teacher, to that person. When we consider Paul’s clear and logical understanding of the Old Testament scriptures and how he communicates them with such conviction, we have to at least, acknowledge a little bit that, Yes while God was working in that man’s life, he was using Gamaliel as his mentor. God was shaping and moulding Paul as he sat under this Raban. As he sat under this highly influential figure. It’s pretty neat to think that this man saw such importance to raise up a younger generation that he let Saul into his world.

Mentors invest time and energy in their protégé’s. Intentional influence is an invaluable investment in the lives of another. Now where am I going with this? Saul, who became Paul, was a protégé and then Saul who became Paul, had a conviction that I need a protégé. That protégé was another guy named Timothy. This is how Luke describes the meeting of Paul and Timothy in Acts 16:1-5:

“Paul and Silas went first to Derbe and then on to Lystra. There they met Timothy, a young disciple whose mother was a Jewish believer but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well thought of by the believers at Lystra so Paul wanted him to join them on the journey in deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left for everyone knew that his father was a Greek. Then they went from town to town explaining the decision regarding the commandments. That they were to be obeyed as decided by the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew daily in numbers.”

Let’s step back here for a bit. So we have Timothy who has a reputation. He’s regarded as a young disciple; he was well thought of; and along comes Paul, who also has a reputation. He has a good reputation among Christ followers, not so much...with the Jewish leaders of the day. And Paul says “Hey Timothy! I want you to come on board with me.” Timothy says “That’s putting my life on the line! You’re asking me to get into a whole lot of trouble, because, Why?” Because Paul saw something in Timothy and that’s pretty amazing to think that Paul was modelling what he had had happen in his life. Paul took on a protégé who travelled with him. Who learned from him. Who ate with him; who had conversations

with him along the way; who experienced persecution. Paul wanted to influence his life, and so he did. As a result, we have 1 and 2nd Timothy, the Books. Those letters often are looked to as examples of...How do we figure out who is an Elder and who is a Deacon? What do we do with people who are teaching false teachings? What do we do with dissenters and people who are causing conflict? Those letters, they're very instruction oriented but if you read them with an eye for how Paul influenced Timothy's life, you get some pretty encouraging examples.

These are just a few. I could have listed them all but these are the one's that jumped out at me as examples that we can take and apply in our world. You see, Paul embraces Timothy as a true son in the faith. That term of endearment is pretty special. In Timothy, I'm reading that and I'm going "Wow! This guy really cares. This guy really wants me to succeed. He reminds Timothy; "Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies made about you so that by following them, you might fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience." Well, we know that Timothy's in a church in Ephesus that's having some issues and here is Paul saying "Go back to where you began. Go back to the time when you knew absolutely that God had His hand on your life and God wanted to use you and stand strong on that." He reminds. That's what a mentor can do for a protégé. Paul instructs Timothy to train himself in Godliness. If a protégé has a desire to grow the mentor has the opportunity to give that protégé steps along the way. He advises Timothy to exercise and take the normal precautions to protect his health. This one kind of surprised me. Like, what's this one doing in here? And there are passages in first and second Timothy that would lead people to believe that Timothy had stomach issues, that Timothy had health issues at times and whether it be or not be, we do, and a mentor can come alongside a protégé and say "You know what? While it's all good that you are sitting and reading your Bible. While it's all good that you want to evangelize the world. While it's all good, if you're not taking care of yourself, it's no good. You need to take care of yourself. So it's a very practical thing. What I noticed was that, in essence there's a whole perspective happening here where Paul is addressing Timothy, heart; mind; soul; and strength. And where does that come from? Heart; mind; soul; and strength, ring any bells? Love the Lord your God with heart; mind; soul; and strength. Paul is looking at the whole person and addressing the whole person and saying "You've got to keep going!" And that's something that we can do.

As a person who desires to get to know God more, I have been known to go to Ron and say: "Okay! Bring it on. Tell me what I need to do to change. Tell me." And he, of course, in his wisdom is like "Well, I'm not going to give you any advice, I'm just going to listen to you." "Thanks for that, that's what I need." And then you get "I've been praying for you." "Perfect." But that's what happens right? The mentor knows the protégé because they have this relationship. Paul knew Timothy because they travelled together, they had a connection.

We're getting right around to the end here and I want to take this now from Gamaliel, to Paul, to Timothy, to us. As I was reading and looking into things, I came across some amazing

initiative and I thought: “What an example to the Church.” Anybody here know the name ‘Rolex’? What does Rolex do? Watches! Rolex does watches. I was surprised by this but, there was initiative started in 2002 called The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Rolex? Arts initiative? What’s the deal. Well, Rolex saw the value of investing in people to contribute to global culture. The program seeks out gifted artists from all around the world and brings them together with artistic masters for a year of creative, collaborative, one-on-one, mentoring.

Anybody recognize the curly haired woman in the back of this photo? Margaret Atwood! Anybody recognize the woman in the front? Didn’t think so. That’s because she’s not as accomplished as Margaret Atwood. But she’s part of the program and her name is Naomi Alderman. She’s an up and coming author and this is what she says about her experience as a protégé. She says: “It was wonderful to meet Margaret Atwood when she was interviewing candidates to protégé. I thought, if we end up doing this, it will be a relationship where I am going to have to be constantly thinking. It’s exciting! I don’t think I would have embraced the mentorship if the mentor hadn’t been Margaret Atwood. I’ve admired her work for so long, particularly her essays, which have been a source of inspiration and courage for me. Courage is really important for a writer.”

Constantly thinking. This isn’t just a friendship, this is recognition that someone who is an artistic master, has taken time and energy to invest in me and so, that’s where the intentional part of influence comes in.” In a mentor/protégé relationship, it’s intentional and this is a great example to me. I love what she had to say about inspiration and courage. One of the big take-aways from Mike’s message last week, if you remember, he spoke on ‘The Encourager’. It was a question he asked: “Who can you call on to pour courage into you when your tank is running low?” Who can you call on to encourage you? Naomi Alderman recognized that courage in the person of a mentor and we all need encouragers. The cool thing is, when you’ve established that mentor/protégé relationship, you give each other permission to pour courage into your tank. That can show up in many, many ways. Intentional protégés are everywhere, in every walk of life.

Some of you might know these two. And I see some of you going “Really, seriously, you’re going to bring these guys up in your sermon?” (Picture of Justin Bieber and ?) In the entertainment world this is probably one of the most well known, popular, intentional, relationships, that has taken place, where one has influenced the other in amazing ways. That’s all I’m getting at. I’m not saying their music is any good, I’m just saying that the entertainment world does this. The artistic world does this. Another entertainment example, I threw this one in for Mike, he’s not here but, I’m thinking of you buddy! But that’s another example (some Star Wars???) You see a protégé walking with a mentor. Maybe not so common to see this.....Maybe the mentor/protégé relationship happens more often than I’m willing to acknowledge. Maybe I need to think about how that’s going to be part of my life.

So, who is your Gamaliel? Do you have a mentor? Who is your Timothy? Do you have a protégé? As I wrap this up, daydream with me for a moment. Picture the relationships in your life as a champagne fountain. Champagne is a drink used by people in celebration. As it pours into the first cup, down into the other cups,what happens? The cups get filled and they overflow. Now, using that creative part of your mind, get rid of the cups and replace them with people that you know. When you replace them with people that you know, something is happening. Life is overflowing. But each cup each person is placed in the exact spot for something beautiful to happen. One step further...take the Heart of God, put it at the top of the equation. Jesus spoke about 'living water'. That living water flows into our lives but we're not just called to be a reservoir, we're called to let it flow. And when we have intentional relationships with people, that love, that influence overflows, from top down. The Holy Spirit does some work and God's influence changes lives. So I go back to this. Without God in the picture, you see it happening in the entertainment world, in the artistic world. You see it happening in the professional world, the scientific world. With God in the picture, it can happen in our midst.

Spice Rack! Go back to the Spice Rack. Are you a protégé? Is there a protégé in your life? We can change the faces of our schools; of our neighbourhoods; of our places of employment; and it happens in the Body of Christ, with mentoring and protégé's in our lives. Intentional influence is an invaluable investment in another person. Prayer.