



Dear Friends,

The theme for our men's breakfast this Saturday is, "Every bloke needs a mentor." You could just as well say, "every believer needs a mentor." This got me thinking about mentors in my life.

The person who has had the most significant impact on my life for Christ is Stuart. He was my church pastor and mentor.

I first met Stuart in my mid-twenties. I was at a formative stage of my Christian life. I had been following Jesus for less than a decade. I had been married for only a few years and was working as a lawyer. We had just left the church we had belonged to for several years. It was a church that prided itself on being doctrinally pure, and the self-talk was, our church hadn't compromised on the truth like the rest. Sadly, that kind of culture resulted in us feeling spiritually superior to other Christians. The church environment was having a corrosive effect on our Christian walk. We lacked love and grace.

That was where I was at when we joined the church that Stuart pastored. I can recall saying to myself, "I need to re-learn how to be a follower of Jesus. I'm so proud and self-righteous."

God was gracious. The new church we joined and its pastor and his wife impacted us for Christ in ways we won't fully appreciate till we enter our eternal rest. They loved the truth of Scripture. But they recognised their own sinfulness, and their need of grace. God's love for them in Christ so gripped their hearts that it permeated their relationships with fellow Christians. There was a joy about following Jesus, grounded in a realism and messiness about our sinfulness that also recognised our only hope of heaven rested in God's boundless grace at Calvary.

It was at church that I met the person whose mentoring has had a lifelong effect on me. I am delighted to say that Kathryn and I are still close friends to Stuart and Pauline, and we love spending time with them.

Let me mention three ways that Stuart mentored me as a young Christian.

First, Stuart not only preached God's grace in Christ. He modelled it in his pastoral leadership and relationships. I watched closely as Stuart continued to love people at church who had treated him poorly. I recall there was one person who had been very critical of Stuart. Instead of avoiding him, Stuart invited he and his wife over for a meal. This was grace in action.

Second, Stuart taught me to enjoy the good gifts of God's creation. I can recall Stuart preaching and saying that Christians ought to be the most joyful people in the world and not killjoys and party-poopers. That was news to me. I had experienced an austere kind of Christianity that was suspicious of enjoying the good things in life. I came to properly appreciate things I had always loved like music, films and sport, though no longer as guilty pleasures.

Finally, Stuart showed me what it looks like to be a godly man as a husband and father. My Dad had been a faithful provider, hard worker and a constant presence at home. But I didn't know what it looked like to be a gentle, servant leader in my family, alongside Kathryn. Stuart was a role model. We spent lots of time in their home, and I got to see up close and personal how to live as a Christian man in the family.

In fact, that is still the case. I continue to learn from Stuart's example as a grandparent. He and Pauline have dedicated themselves to supporting their kids to raise their families, and to building close relationships with their grandchildren. They are an inspiration.

The reason I share all this is because I want you to get yourself a mentor. However young or old you may be. Because none of us are ever too old to grow up in Christ.

God Bless,
Mark Adams