

Life Coaching

In his chapter "Life Coaching," Stu Weber evokes some powerful images of men who have spent a lifetime gathering wisdom, a view of the world, insights into what matters most, and who recognize an overwhelming desire in their soul to pass on what they've learned to another generation. One of the most appealing aspects of what I do is the opportunity to invest myself in the lives of other men, and to pass on the vision of what life can really mean for them - to give them "the big picture."

Where did I get that vision? Well, from a lot of places, in a lot of ways. I am being mentored through books, and through association with some of the most influential men and women of my generation. They lit a torch in my spirit. They re-light it every time they speak, and every time they act. They beckon me to pass on that torch as quickly as I can, to as many people as I can, so that together we will light up the night and drive away the darkness. I don't actually give away my torch when I do that. I can't, because it's mine. But I can light someone else's torch by letting my flame leap across to theirs. Together, the torches we hold create a light far bigger and brighter than the flames we hold separately. We become a lighthouse guiding others to safe harbor, a beacon lighting the narrow path ahead of them in a mountain pass, a runway lit up to lead them safely home through the storm and fog of their lives. It's awesome! This is a way of life. I love it!

My first close and personal mentor was a country gentleman named Bill Kelly. He showed me with grace and kindness what it meant to be consistent, and to be patient. He showed me that it was possible to take ownership of what I do, and to be creative within the mold that God has defined. He would take time to listen to me with concern as I laid out some issues in my life for his wise counsel. Usually all he'd tell me is something like, "I think you pretty well understand the situation, and you're making the right choices." When I asked what I should do next, inevitably he'd tell me exactly what he told me the last time I asked, and the time before that. That always made me smile.

He did it without rebuke, without frustration, and with such firm conviction that he laid a foundation of faith in me - faith in what I do, faith in my leaders, faith in him as a man, and faith in myself. Encouragement. A sparkle in the eye. A calm demeanor that chased away my doubts. When he was on his final journey, I suggested to his son Scott that what Bill most wanted to hear was that Scott had sat at his feet as a student, and he had learned those wonderful lessons Bill had imparted to him over the course of a lifetime. Every man I know wants to hear that from his children, or from his other "children" that he has coached and guided whether in little league, or Pop Warner football, or just sitting on his front stoop talking to a bunch of youngsters in his neighborhood. It's the great calling of every teacher in every school in the nation, if they're truly teaching.

Have you ever watched old men on park benches sharing their life experiences with kids on bicycles? In high school, we had an old man, 102 years old, who was our high school mentor - a visitor who would come and preach, I guess you'd call it, to every graduating class. He would give us a vision of how short life is, and how precious, and how wonderful. He would inspire every new generation to go out and lay hold of their future with both hands. He was missing an ear, lost in World War I, the Great War, the war to end all wars. Despite his quivering and gravelly voice, there was an element of passion when he spoke, a sense that this old man knew what counted in life, and of a love for us that made absolutely no sense. He didn't know us. How could he? And yet he reached into our hearts and touched something we didn't understand yet. He would take time after the ceremony to wander the halls, seeking out children like myself who were on the brink of adulthood, on the brink of greatness, and give each one of us a warm and personal word of encouragement. He was the first mentor I'd ever met. I've found an army of them over time. What a marvelous heritage we have. What a marvelous heritage we can leave behind!

Stu Weber describes a mentor this way: someone who fundamentally affects and influences the life of another. Mentors nurture our soul, shape our character, and call us to be complete men. They have knowledge, drive, purpose, vision, confidence, wisdom, strength, and character. They are straight-talking, straight-living men who are unthreatened by those who oppose them. And most crucially, they are men

who develop a relationship with someone else at a *point of need*. They are heroes who know and care for another. How's that for an image to live up to?

Stu says, "You don't have to speak a lot, or posture, or take over, or dominate, or take the special seat. But you do have to do at least two things. One, you have to love those around you until they feel it. And two, you have to live out your own biblical values to the core... Mentoring is living out your core values. Mentoring is 'a long obedience in one direction.' And rubbing shoulders along the way." I can think of nothing more worthwhile than that, nothing more rewarding, nothing more valuable. It is the calling of every man, and every woman, to nurture the next generation. Christopher Columbus said that every life goes through 3 stages:

1. acquiring knowledge, experience, and resources - i.e. being a student.
2. using those to acquire the stuff of life – material resources, influence, etc., and
3. becoming an ambassador capable of helping others do 1 and 2, a mentor.

That's learning, getting, and giving. We have what I believe is a unique capacity to fully realize all 3 of those stages in short order. We have an opportunity to help men in their twenties reach the third stage of their life through proper mentorship. If that doesn't light your torch, I don't know what will. I'm out looking for folks to mentor me, and for folks to mentor. A hand up, a hand down. This is team. This is family. This is legacy-building at its finest. And time is short...