

Living The Maximum Life With Power and Purpose

Right Relationships

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Right Relationships

"The quality of your life will be in direct proportion to the quality of your relationships." Now mark that well, "The quality of your life will be in direct proportion with the quality of your relationships." Therefore, you must choose and develop relationships that support your life mission, or you'll never live that maximum life.

You need models to motivate you.

Modeling is the best way to learn. Whether you are learning how to tie your shoes, drive a car, or operate a personal computer. We learn faster and better through examples. Don't just tell me how to do it also show me how. Whatever the learning objective, you learn faster and easier and with fewer mistakes as long as you have a proper model.

Now in the same way, the quickest way to achieve your goals in life is to find somebody who is already doing with their life what you want to do and copy it—that's the key. You find somebody who is already where you want to be spiritually, intellectually, financially and relationally; look at what he is doing and model after it. This is very biblical. The apostle Paul recognized his role as a life model when he said "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern that we gave you." (Philippians 3:17) He said, "Follow my example, and follow the pattern I've set forth." The process works this way, as you follow a model; you in turn become a model. "You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia." (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7)

Jesus openly claimed to be a model. John 13, after He had washed the disciples' feet giving them that example of humility and service, He said in verse 15, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." It is human nature to imitate. When you were an infant the way you learned to do anything was by copying what you saw done. Now the problem with that is as a child you don't get to choose your models. You just model after those who are closest to you. Therefore, as a child, if you were around somebody who was a successful person, you likely developed into a high achiever. If you on the other hand were around a negative example, you probably developed a negative attitude. If you saw anger modeled in your home, don't be surprised if you've got a bad temper. Some of us grew up under very positive models and others under negative, but most of us probably with a mix.

Fortunately, as an adult, we can choose our models. Therefore, as an adult, no matter what your past was, you can re-pattern and re-program your mind. Choose models that will take your life where you want it to be. I don't know what kind of student you are of history, but every great leader in the history of the world has patterned after a model. General George Patton, World War II hero, was a very, very stringent disciple of Alexander the Great. Martin Luther King's model for non-violent protest was Gandhi. Gandhi, while not a Christian, said he modeled his lifestyle after Jesus Christ.

Models are the fastest way to move forward in your life mission. Find somebody who is already where you want to be and follow that example. The beauty about models is that they motivate us. Because as they break through barriers and make accomplishments, we know we can, too.

I love the story about Roger Bannister. For years and decades, physiologists, doctors, scientists thought that the human being never could break the four-minute mile. In fact one doctor wrote a big piece in *the American Medical Association Journal*. He said, "Do you realize that your heart would explode and your lungs would collapse if a human being ever would approach that four-minute barrier?" Then a fellow by the name of Roger

Bannister did it. After he ran the four-minute mile, within 15 months, so did 32 other people. Do you see what a model can do for you?

Who are your models? Who are the people that you respect, living or dead, spiritually, intellectually and relationally? Who are you modeling your life after? If you don't have anybody like that, you're losing out. You're going through life wasting time and energy, trying to learn lessons that you don't have to learn firsthand; you can better learn them through the experience of someone else. You need models to motivate you.

You need mentors to mold you.

A mentor is a counselor, personal coach or trainer; Unlike a model, whom you may or may not know personally. In fact, a model may have lived generations before your lifetime but a mentor, on the other hand, knows you very well and cares about you very much. A mentor is committed to your growth, to your goals, and to your soul. Mentors are extremely involved in your life. In fact, they are the people God uses in your life to bring out the best in you.

The need for mentors is found throughout Scripture. Look at Proverbs 15:22, Solomon said, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." In my Bible, I've circled those two words, counsel and adviser. No matter how successful you become, you always need a coach.

Look on television this afternoon and watch Michael Jordan. Michael Jordan has a coach. Steffi Graf has a coach. Pat Roddy has a coach. The actor Tom Hanks has a coach; there's a director coaching his every move. That's one of the reasons those people are professionals. If you find successful people who are really sharpening their skills, you can be assured they have a mentor.

"Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise." (Proverbs 19:20) As I was thinking about this point this week, I counted it up and I have had in my lifetime six different mentors—people who have cared enough about me and have given me enough of their time to mold my life. I am going through a life transition right now, I am frankly looking for a couple more. I've never been smart enough on my own to do any job I've ever had in my life and I will never be. But mentors have taken my life and molded it. They've guided it through the choppy waters to successful conclusions.

Folks, there are people all around you who could be your mentors and you need to find them if you don't have them. They don't have to be smarter than you in every area. They just have to be good at what you want to be good at. See the fact of the matter is, we're all ignorant, just on different subjects, right? But there are people out there who could guide you to your goals. There are several ways to benefit.

How you benefit from a mentor.

1. Ask questions.

Don't be afraid to ask a question. You know the older we get, the more we act like we don't need to know anything. Isn't that foolish?

"The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out." (Proverbs 20:5) If you're going to be a man or woman of understanding, you better learn how to get that bucket down in the deep waters of a wise man's life and pull out that water. The way to do this is by asking questions.

I don't know about you, but I have a relatively standard list of questions that I'm ready to ask at the drop of a hat when I'm around wise people who can mentor me. When I'm around people who know something I don't

know, who've experienced something I haven't experienced, who can help mold me, I have questions like these:

- a) "Tell me about the greatest decisions you've ever made.
- b) Tell me about the greatest successes in your life and what you learned from them.
- c) Tell me about the greatest failure in your life and what you learned from it.
- d) How do you manage your time?
- e) How do you handle stress?
- f) What are the books that you've read that have made the greatest difference in your life?"

Mark this well: The true mark of wisdom is the ability to draw good counsel out of other people. When you can do that, it will help you live the maximum life.

I read a true story about a fellow who is now preaching, but when he was an intern for a preacher, he was there for an entire year. And he said, "You know the whole time I was there, the guy got up and preached and he never preached a dud. Every sermon wasn't just a hit, it was a home run; he just knocked it out of the park. So I went in there to interview him and said, 'I've been with you a year, and you've never messed up, you've never flopped, I want to know your secret.' The preacher said, 'I don't have any secrets.' The intern insisted 'No, no, don't give me that. There is something different about you than other people who have preached, I want to know what it is.' He said, 'Really, really, I do what other preachers do.' And the intern asked, 'No, you tell me, is there anything in your life?' The preacher said, 'Thirty years ago when I went into the pulpit, I made a covenant with God. I told Him if He would bless what I do, that I would read the New Testament each week.' He said, 'In 30 years, I've never missed a week in that commitment.'" Wouldn't you hate to have left without that deep water of wisdom—staying in the Word?

2. Accept suggestions or accept feedback.

"Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—" (Proverbs 1:5) Sometimes when you listen, you're going to have to listen to criticism. That's okay as long as it's from a good source one who loves you and who's wise. Consider Proverbs 25:12, "Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear."

Folks, when you're in the presence of someone who is knowledgeable, someone you trust and someone who loves you, listen to them. Whether they encourage you or whether they correct you, the feedback is essential to the maximum life. I don't know how many of you are into rocket guidance; probably not all that many, but when NASA launches a rocket to go up to the moon or Mars or whatever, do you know how they do that? It's not that easy to do because the earth is constantly moving, the moon is constantly moving around the earth, both those bodies are moving around the sun and our whole solar system is moving through space. How do you keep that rocket on track? They don't just program in the direction and say, "All right, it's on its own." There is a computer on that rocket that every millisecond is feeding back data to the home computer which is constantly sending back to correct the course. There is a constant feedback to keep that rocket on course. That's the way it is in life and that's why we need mentors.

Now whenever I say that to an older Christian, his first reaction is, "Well, I've made so many mistakes in my life, I couldn't be a mentor." You don't have to be perfect to be a mentor; you just need to be just one step ahead. We need models to motivate us and mentors to mold us.

3. Partners to propel you.

People who are committed to the same life mission that you have motivate and spur you toward your common goals. Jesus had 12 of them didn't he? If you read the New Testament, Paul had nine. Everybody needs a partner.

Very few people ever stop and ask: "What am I going to do with my life?" If you've been serious about this study, if you've taken notes, if you have developed a life mission and a life vision and if you've got concrete goals to take you to that maximum life you are among less than one percent of the people in this nation. That means you are going to have to actively seek out other people who want to grow with you because frankly, you're in a class by yourself. You need to find people who will want to help you grow.

Solomon said, "Two are better than one for they have a good return for their work." (Ecclesiastes 4:9) We all need partners. Benjamin Franklin had a support group that he called, "My Most Ingenious Friends." That group would get together, write papers, discuss them, ask questions and help each other. They met every Friday night for 40 years. Do you wonder why Franklin was creative and ingenious through his late eighties? Do you wonder why his very best inventions occurred after he was 70 years old? I'll tell you why, because he had partners who propelled him. Do you?

Thomas Edison had a group he called his "Mastermind Alliance." In a six-year period that group came up with 300 different patented inventions. You say, "I'm not an intellect." I'm no Edison, I'm no Franklin, and I don't need a 'Mastermind Alliance.'" If you're a Christian, you need partners to help pull you hand in hand on your mission to heaven. God designed his church in part to edify.

"So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5) But look at this, using the metaphor of the human body, Paul in essence said, "Christians, you are partners in this journey called Life and you are relating to one another like the heart relates to the lungs, or the arm to the hand, or the neck to the head. You must have each other to lean on and draw strength from."

We're like a mountain-climbing team going up Mount Everest. They're tied together by those ropes. They're tied for their safety and strength. They're all working with one another to help the team reach the top of the peak. Christians are pulling each other up. We're relying on each other's strengths. Frankly, if one of us falls, then we're all in danger of falling. We are that interconnected. So if you've got a life mission and, your life is going somewhere, it really does matter who you're tied to.

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) If you have a life mission and you're in partnership with somebody who doesn't accept it, but opposes it, at very best they will resent it, at worst they will sabotage it. You'd better choose your life partners carefully. I'm talking about your business partners. But more importantly, I'm talking about your marriage partners. You need a partner who will propel you.

4. Need friends who will feel for you.

You need some friends who will support you. "A friend loves at all times..." (Proverbs 17:17a) A true friend is someone who walks in while everybody else is walking out. When other people see through you, a friend sees you through. When you make a mistake and everybody else wants to rub it in, a friend rubs it out. They're consistent, they hang in there with you, and they support you emotionally, physically and spiritually. They encourage you. They do what the Hebrew writer said in chapter 10:24, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

Friends are a key to a maximum life because you will never rise above the level of your closest friends. Mark that well. It's really much like what I was just talking about with partners. You never rise above the level of your closest friends. It's true. Birds of a feather do flock together. So, if you want to soar with eagles, you can't run with the turkeys.

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" (1 Corinthians 15:33) I want to be very frank with you about some relationships here, very frank. If you're serious about living the maximum life and being all God meant you to be, you may have to break off some friendships that you have right now. That's the truth. Bad company does corrupt good character. One of the reasons that some of you have stalled on your life mission or gone full steam ahead with God is because you're afraid of what that will do in a relationship. You're afraid you will be rejected. You're afraid they will disapprove. You're afraid you will be ridiculed or whatever. Do you want to waste your time, waste your life, simply seeking to be popular?

Simply stated, the bottom line is: "Do I care more about God's approval or someone else's?" If you're honest with yourself and your answer is: I really do care about someone else's approval more, the Bible calls that idolatry. That is simply putting someone else in God's place. We've got another word for it today, today we call it co-dependency. Co-dependency is letting someone else set the goals, the purposes and the ambitions of your life. You can call it whatever you want, the bottom line is it's wrong. It's wrong and it blows the maximum life out of the water.

Some of you may need to ask some tough questions about some of your closest relationships. You may need to ask: "Are they helping or hindering my life mission?" "Are they bringing out what God wants in me?" "Are they drawing me closer to God, or are they drawing me farther away from Him?" When you get to the last question and if you find they're drawing you farther away from God, that person is no friend. I don't care how long you've known them. They are no friend. Then how does one get the right kind of friends?" In a nutshell, I think it's to be the right kind of friend. You attract what you are, you reap what you sow. What you give as a friend to others is usually what you get. If you want time invested in you, you'll have to do the same, but you need friends, you need godly friends, or your life won't be what it can be.

5. You need a Savior to save you.

Jesus said "'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.'" (John 3:17) This old illustration explains it succinctly.

If our greatest need had been an educator, God would have sent us a teacher.

If our greatest need had been a new philosophy, God would have sent a philosopher.

If it had been money,
God would have sent an economist.

If our greatest need had been in entertainment, God would have sent a comedian.

But our greatest need was forgiveness, So God sent us a Savior.

Relationships are extremely important. You need models, mentors, partners, friends and brothers and sisters in the Lord. But those really aren't worth anything if they're not built on the foundation of the relationship that you have personally with Jesus Christ.

"You see, at just the right time, while we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6-8) Later in that same facet, he said "He did that so we could have friendship with God." One of the most mind-boggling concepts in all the universe is that God, the Creator of everything wants to be my friend. He wants to put His arm around me and you and say, "I love you just like your closest friend. No, I love you more than your closest friend." That's possible through the love that Jesus demonstrated.

Examine all your relationships. Start with your relationship with Jesus Christ put your faith and trust in Him through obedience to His Word. Lesson # 1302, March 2, 1997