

INFLUENCE

Living and Sharing a Life of Wisdom

During certain seasons of life, the land between what was and what will be can be treacherous. For the adolescent looking toward teen years, the graduate on the brink of adulthood or the parents of those new adults adjusting to what lies ahead, life in the land of in-between can be as disconcerting as standing on alien soil. The ground of life shifts and changes and takes on a new and sometimes even exciting face with every new sunrise.

There are others in the land of in-between who are not on the cusp of a new land. Rather they are, in a sense, bound for a time by a life-role. What of those who are mired in the in-between? What of those who by their very life-roles find themselves bound to a season yet called to a purpose? There is a time in the life of many students and adults alike when they feel tethered by the neck to the land of the in-between . . . stuck somewhere between where they've come from and where they're going to—aliens who no longer belong where they've been but haven't yet arrived where God is taking them.

For those in the land of in-between, a godly mentor provides invaluable counsel about the path that lies ahead . . . while the worldly mentor can cause monumental damage.

What does the Bible say about mentoring? That will be our question as we spend the next several weeks discovering how to walk with the wise, how to influence and be influenced by others who follow God fully.

Influence: Living and Sharing a Life of Wisdom is a flexible Bible study—designed with options that allow you to go as deep each week as you choose. If you're just starting out and feeling a little overwhelmed, stick with the main text and don't think a second thought about the sidebar assignments. If you're looking for a challenge, then take the sidebar prompts and dig with vigor! As you move along through the study, think of the sidebars and "Digging Deeper" boxes as that 2% of lycra you find in certain jeans . . . the wiggle-room that will help them fit just right.

Life has a way of ebbing and flowing and this study is designed to ebb and flow right along with it!

Enjoy!

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How to use this study

Flexible studies meet you where you are and take you as far as you want to go.

1. WEEKLY STUDY: The main text guides you through the complete topic of study for the week.

2. FYI boxes: For Your Information boxes provide bite-sized material to shed additional light on the topic.

FYI:

Reading Tip: Begin with prayer

You may have heard this a million times over and if this is a million and one, so be it. Whenever you read or study God's Word, first pray and ask His Spirit to be your Guide.

3. ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes: Sidebar boxes give you the option to push yourself a little further. If you have extra time or are looking for an extra challenge, you can try one, all, or any number in between! These boxes give you the ultimate in flexibility.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Study: *torah*/law

The first of eight Hebrew key words we encounter for God's Word is *torah* translated "law." If you're up for a challenge this week, do a word study to learn what you can about *torah*. Run a concordance search and examine where the word *torah* appears in the Old Testament and see what you can learn about from the contexts.

If you decide to look for the word for "law" in the New Testament, you'll find that the primary Greek word is *nomos*.

Be sure to see what Paul says about the law in Galatians 3 and what Jesus says in Matthew 5.

4. DIGGING DEEPER boxes: If you're looking to go further, Digging Deeper sections will help you sharpen your skills as you continue to mine the truths of Scripture for yourself.

Digging Deeper

What else does God's Word say about counselors?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about counselors.

Start by considering what you already know about counsel from the Word of God and see if you can show where these truths are in the Bible. Make sure that the Word says what you think it says.

Week One

Wise Friends Lead to Wise Ways

*Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,
but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*

—Proverbs 13:20 ESV

It's a buzzword in our culture today. The business world mentors, the church mentors, community groups, schools, and organizations of all stripes pour time and resources and energy into mentoring. What is it, though, and more importantly what does God say about it? Perhaps Solomon, the author of the book of Proverbs, gives us the most concise word on the topic, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise." Over the next several weeks, we'll look at God's Word, the Bible, to discover for ourselves what God has to say about mentoring as we look at a variety of mentoring relationships throughout the pages of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

We'll see there is no perfect formula. Mentoring relationships look different and serve diverse purposes in the lives of those involved. In fact (we may as well warn you now!) if you're looking for a slick program to roll into your church, match people up, and punch out perfect little Christians, you're looking in the wrong place. Spiritual growth can never be programmed; it is a work of the Spirit. Our part will be to see the examples God has provided us and learn what He has to teach us.

While the mentors we meet along our biblical journey will vary in their giftings and positions, we'll see they all share one important trait: wisdom. So, let's get started on our quest to discover what God has to say about mentoring.

FYI:

If you're in a class

Complete **Week One** together on your first day of class. This will be a great way to start getting to know one another and will help those who are newer to Bible study get their bearings.

JAN SNAPSHOT

Boundaries in Mentoring Relationships

Boundaries are the simple lines you draw in your head that indicate what you will and won't do. A boundary is a safe line of demarcation that allows the mentor and mentee to understand "the rules." Some boundaries to consider are: *How much time will be invested in this arrangement? Are phone calls appropriate? Should meetings be at appointed times or at more casual intersections? Will the investment of time be limited or is it open-ended?* Mentors draw the boundaries but first they have to be established internally. Then they can be incorporated in relationships.

CONSIDER the WAY you THINK

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "mentoring"?

Have you ever been involved in a mentoring relationship? If so, what was your experience like?

What are some potential benefits from having a mentor? Are there specific areas in your life where you'd like input from a mentor? Why?

What apprehensions, if any, does the idea of mentoring stir up within you?

What potential problems arise in mentoring relationships?

Why do you think the world and the Church have such a love affair with the concept of mentoring? In your opinion, do the world and the Church approach mentoring the same way and with the same objectives? Explain.

If you could have any person for a mentor, who would it be and why?

What qualities do you think are necessary in a mentor? Which of these do you see in yourself and those around you?

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

As we begin our study of this topic, it's important to remember our goal will be finding out what the biblical view, God's view, is on mentoring. Because the word "mentoring" *per se* does not occur in the Bible, we'll look for mentoring concepts, for relationships showing an experienced generation passing truths on to an inexperienced one.

SETTING the SCENE

We know from the greater context that the speaker in this passage is Moses.

READ Deuteronomy 6:1, 5-7 paying attention to how God told Moses to instruct the people to pass on truth about Him. **MARKING** the pronouns *you* and *your* will help you zero in on some of these instructions.

Deuteronomy 6:1, 5-7

- 1 *"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it . . ."*
- 5 *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*
- 6 *These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.*
- 7 *You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."*

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Beat us to the punch!

If you were teaching on mentoring without a study guide, what texts would you go to? What questions would you ask of the texts when you got there? Rest assured, we'll take you on a tour of some of the Bible's main mentoring texts, but if you're looking for an extra challenge, if you're looking to be further equipped, make a habit of trying to beat us to the punch. Instead of simply responding to the questions in this book, think beyond it to what questions you'd ask if you were on your own and where you'd find answers. This study will serve you well with the information it leads you to. It will serve you and the Kingdom even better, though, if it spurs you on to think for yourself as one who is faithful and can teach others also.

Record some questions you think need to be answered below along with potential texts to explore.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Get a Context for Deuteronomy 6:1, 5-7

If you have extra time, read and summarize the rest of Deuteronomy 6. Context—the environment in which something dwells—is critical to understanding the meaning of a text. Although we'll give you the context you need for this study, you're always better off checking context for yourself. It is part of learning to handle texts accurately. Record what you learn about the context from Deuteronomy 6 below.

FYI:

Make Your Own Marks

Please, please, please feel free to mark the text whatever way works best for you. As we go through the main texts, we'll suggest simple markings to help people get started, but if you already have a system of symbols and colors, go with that. The suggested markings in the lesson are designed to make it as easy as possible for anyone to jump in without a full marking system, colored pencils, and the resolve to mark every word in their Bibles. Know what we mean?

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

As we study mentoring, we'll also learn and practice inductive Bible study skills. You'll be able to use these skills whenever you study the Bible. One basic inductive skill is questioning the text. As we seek answers in our study, we'll ask five W and one H questions—Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Let's try it out on Deuteronomy 6:1, 5-7.

Who is speaking in these verses and whose message is he bringing?

Who is he speaking to? How do you know this?

What commandment does he give?

Where should it be fulfilled?

How should it be carried out?

Why is Moses giving the instruction?

When are the people supposed to teach?

What can we learn from this text about who and when to mentor?

If you apply these principles, what specific people will you focus on mentoring? What age group? Why?

What does passing along knowledge of God presuppose? Where can this break down?

How can you live these principles? With your children? With others who are following behind you? Think in specifics. How can you demonstrate biblical principles in your life all day long?

FYI:

More on Questions

As you ask questions of the text, remember not every verse will answer every question. Some verses answer *Who?* and *What?* while others answer *When?* and *Where?* Ask questions and follow-ups as appropriate and reason through answers you discover. The more you ask, the more you will find.

FYI:

Why the New American Standard?

While there are a variety of solid Bible translations on the market today, the New American Standard Version provides an extremely accurate word for word translation of Scripture from the original languages making it a perfect match for an Inductive Bible Study. When going deep in God's Word through study, always opt for an excellent word for word translation. Others are the English Standard and New King James versions.

JAN **SNAPSHOT**

Jan Silvious On Kay Arthur

Kay Arthur mentored me when I was a new Christian. Neither of us knew that was what was going on. We were just working out our lives, doing what we believed God had set before us. In the process, however, Kay showed me how to “do ministry.” I watched her talk to people, ask hard questions, give hugs to those who needed them and speak strong words in due season to those who were stumbling. When I was watching and learning, I had no idea that my life would take the course that it did.

Becoming an author, speaker, counselor and now a coach was never on my radar. Yet, I can look back and see that had I never met Kay, had she not welcomed me to walk alongside her, and had I not had my eyes open to observe, I would not be doing what I’m doing now.

One of my favorite sayings is, “What might have been does not exist, so don’t even go there!” I am a firm believer in that truth but I think it can’t hurt to look back every now and then at “what might NOT have been” if certain people had not played prominent roles in our lives and mentored us, whether we knew it was happening or not.

SETTING the SCENE . . .

When Moses died, God raised up Joshua to lead His people Israel into the Promised Land. You can read Joshua’s story in the biblical book of Joshua. The text that follows comes from the last chapter of the book of Joshua.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Joshua 24:31 and **UNDERLINE** the time phrase *all the days* whenever it appears.

Joshua 24:31

31 Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, and had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

How long did Israel continue to serve the Lord?

Based on the text, why did they continue to serve during this time?

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ Judges 2:8-12 and **UNDERLINE** every reference to the generation that arose after Joshua, including pronouns (they, them, etc.).

Judges 2:8-12

- 8 *Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten.*
- 9 *And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.*
- 10 *All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.*
- 11 *Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals,*
- 12 *and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger.*

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

What do we learn about the generation that lived after Joshua and his contemporaries died off?

Look closely at the verbs in verses 11 and 12 and record specifically what Israel did?

From what you have already studied in this lesson, how had they been warned to guard against this?

Notes

Week One: **Wise Friends Lead to Wise Ways**

AN APP FOR THAT:

When the ball is dropped . . .

Something happened between Joshua and his elders and the next generation. The people of Israel followed Joshua and his contemporary elders (some who survived him for a brief time) but that was it. Even though we're looking at a negative outcome, we still have application. One of many questions we can ask is this: *How can we pass on God's Word so we don't end up with a generation that follows us but forsakes God?*

What positive application can you glean for your life from this negative example?

Digging Deeper

What does the Word say about wisdom?

If you can, spend some time this week digging around for what God's Word says about wisdom.

THE BASICS OF A WORD STUDY: Wisdom

Let's work through this one together. Typically when we're looking at a particular verse, we'll word search words from it to find where they and similar words are used elsewhere. This helps us stay true to the original languages. For instance, from Proverbs 13:20, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm," we'll find out what the Hebrew word for *wise* is and where else it appears in the Old Testament.

Using the online tool Blue Letter Bible (www.blueletterbible.org) we'd do this:

1. **Type in Proverbs 13:20.** You can change the version to the NASB we're working with, although leaving the default KJV will also work since both are tied to Strong's Concordance Numbers. **Click the "Search" button.**
2. When you arrive at the next screen, you will see six lettered boxes to the left of Proverbs 13:20. **Click the "C" button** to take you to the concordance link.

3. **Click on the first Strong number** associated with the word *wise*, in this case 2450, links to the original word in Hebrew. In this case, the word *chakam* is an adjective. Clicking this number will bring up another screen that will give you a brief definition of the word and every occurrence in the Old Testament. You can scan the list to see how the word is used elsewhere. Record your observations below.

4. **Repeat the process by clicking on the second Strong number** associated with the word *wise*, 2449. You'll note that this comes from the same root but functions as a verb. Again, clicking the number will show you the part of speech and list everywhere the word occurs in the Old Testament. Record your observations below.

Since we want to unearth other words translated *wisdom* in the Bible, we can take another approach to bring these to the surface. Remember that we've already looked at the word group (*chakam*) that returns the most results in the Old Testament, so don't get overwhelmed by the results.

Again entering www.blueletterbible.org in your browser, take the following steps:

1. **Type in *wise* as your search item.** Again, since we're using the NASB as our main translation, change the version in the dropdown box to NASB.
2. **Scan the results for different Strong numbers.** The very first verse returned shows *wise* as Strong number 7919. When you click on this it will return every instance of the Hebrew word *sakal*. Record what you learn about *sakal* and move to the next number.

ONE STEP FURTHER:

Word Studies

From time to time in this study, you'll be encouraged to do a word study to find out more about how a particular word is used in its original language. Here are some simple steps to help you get started.

1. Find the original language word. (See **Digging Deeper** for step-by-step instructions.)
2. Run a concordance search to see where else this word is used in the Bible.
3. Note how it's used in several contexts.
 - Verse, chapter, book
 - Other books by the same biblical author
 - Other books of the Bible
 - Other ancient works in biblical days
4. Compare your findings with scholarly works including:
 - *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*
 - *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament (TWOT)*
 - *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (sometimes called *Little Kittel*)
 - Other Greek lexicons
 - Theological dictionaries and Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias

Remember, secondary sources have their place . . . *after* primary sources!

PAM SNAPSHOT

“Pam, you need to find a mentor!”

I was probably 22 years old when my friend Karen—who always challenged me in the faith—said, “Pam, you need to find a mentor!” The thought had never crossed my mind, but Karen was the type who knew how to push my buttons. She knew how to spur me on and before I knew it I had taken her advice, talked through some potential women, and found a mentor. Deb, my first official “mentor,” helped me discover and start operating in my spiritual gifts. She introduced me to Precept Bible studies and saw to it that I was trained as a Bible Study Leader. Although Deb and I no longer meet regularly, she has become a close friend and remains a wise influence who I’ll call in a heartbeat when life throws a curveball.

3. **Repeat the process making your way through your search.** The next unique number you’ll find should be 8458 in Proverbs 1:5. (Remember, we’ve already looked at 2449 and 2450 which you’ll find all over your list!) Again, record your observations below. Remember, you’ll be moving from Hebrew to Greek when you hit the New Testament, so the original words will look significantly different.

When you finish examining the words for *wise*, you may want to run through a second time using *wisdom* as your search item.

Take a few minutes to summarize what you’ve learned about the words *wise* and *wisdom* in the Bible.

SETTING the SCENE . . .

The context makes it clear that the *fathers* Paul refers to are the Israelites Moses led out of Egypt.

OBSERVE the TEXT of SCRIPTURE

READ I Corinthians 10:1-11 and **UNDERLINE** every reference to *our fathers*. Include pronouns and synonyms (all, some of them, they, etc.)

1 Corinthians 10:1–11

- 1 *For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;*
- 2 *and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*
- 3 *and all ate the same spiritual food;*
- 4 *and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.*
- 5 *Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.*
- 6 *Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.*
- 7 *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY."*
- 8 *Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.*
- 9 *Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents.*
- 10 *Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.*
- 11 *Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*

READ through the passage again and **CIRCLE** every occurrence of the words *example* and *instruction*.

DISCUSS with your group or PONDER on your own . . .

What do we learn about this generation?

According to verse 11, why were these examples recorded?

What specifics can we learn from this text about how *not* to live?

Take some time to think through the benefits of processing both positive and negative examples as a way to learn the way to walk. As you do, compare what you have seen in the Scriptures we looked at this week.

What is your main take-away application from the Scriptures we have studied this week? How will it change the way you think and act this week?

@ THE END OF THE DAY . . .

Is mentoring a biblical concept? Absolutely! God specifically instructed the people of Israel to teach their children to pass down to the next generation what they knew of God. Unfortunately, they didn't get the job done and we see the terrible results of their disobedience when the next generation grew up rejecting true knowledge of God.

The Bible tells us to pass down what we know and to learn from the examples of others. Paul says examples were recorded so we can learn from them (often bad examples).

In a couple of weeks, we'll look at some long-haul mentoring relationships between Moses and Joshua and then Ruth and Naomi. Next week we're going to consider mentoring relationships that spring up and flourish in critical moments.

