

## **The Greatest Mentor in History!**

by Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2007, published in the *Houston Daily Journal* on Sat., December 22, 2007

Imagine that you are somehow fortunate enough to have the privilege of spending time with the greatest mentor in history. Will you hang onto every word? What tough questions will you raise? Might you sometimes be surprised by the answers? What if your mentor sees potential in you that you don't see--will you welcome being stretched, or will you feel intimidated?

It's Christmas, the time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus--the greatest mentor in history. If you are a believer, let me remind you that you are to become more like Christ every day. That includes being a mentor! If you are not a Christian, I invite you to look beyond all the glitter and excess of this season and discover the Wonder of the universe seeking to build a relationship with you!

Maybe you never thought of Jesus as a mentor. The Bible describes many times when Jesus privately met with his disciples, giving them perspective as a group and answering their individual questions. Throughout the four gospels, Jesus is **our** mentor, answering your questions and mine.

Take a look at Matthew 18. In Capernaum, Jesus was teaching his disciples. Peter asked, "What if someone sins repeatedly against me? How many times must I forgive him?" Jesus tells Peter--and you and me--that we are to forgive repeatedly. (Peter later learns in a very personal way that Jesus not only advocates forgiveness, He freely gives it, even when we fail to remain true to Him!)

That's hard counsel from a leader--and especially to you as a leader! When team members mess up, am I supposed to just forgive them? When they irritate customers? When their mistakes cost the company money? When a quality error is directly attributable to a specific individual?

As tempting as it is to fire that individual *right now*, I need to look at my potentially deficient behaviors. Am I sure I provided all the instructions and resources for this situation? Did I define the expectations adequately? Did I respond appropriately on the first offense? Did my hiring systems fail in allowing this particular individual into my organization?

Look at another mentoring example in John 13. Even on his final evening alive, Jesus provided instructions to his followers. "After washing their feet, Jesus put on his robe again and sat down and asked, 'Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.'"

Jesus is teaching his closest associates (and you and me) how to serve. Yet many who hear this story have difficulty relating. The times are different now; no one wears sandals in the workplace. No one expects to have their feet cleaned. How does Christ's counsel relate to today's workplace?

Allow Jesus to answer that through this example in Matthew 20. Jesus and the disciples have just arrived in Jerusalem, and some of them have been grumbling over their potential positions of power. Jesus says, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you, it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader must be a servant.... for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve."

Servant leadership--ah, now there's an interesting topic! Potential clients sometimes ask, "Do you provide guidance associated with 'servant leadership'?" Yes! And I respond that servant leadership is far more effective--and satisfying--than the "command and control" approach. If you have difficulty considering how you might more effectively serve those under your authority, we need to talk!

We are only a week away from New Year's resolutions. Resolve to be a mentor to someone in 2008. Reread my articles from the past three weeks. If you don't have them, contact me and I'll get them to you. And celebrate enthusiastically the birth of Jesus, the greatest mentor in history!

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