



## Sustaining the Future Through Mentoring

*By Matthew R. Mullins*

I recently had occasion to begin a mentoring relationship with a student attending an Ivy League institution. We share a connection in our love for technology, and speak often on many subjects. At our last meeting I asked him the big question every youth wants to hear (note the sarcasm), “John, what do you want to do with your life?” I heard many maybe’s and I’d likes –but one thing was certain, John was expecting the waters to part once he graduated from his beloved alma mater. Granted it is an Ivy League school, but degree alone does not prepare someone for life. I responded gently, “John, there are many with great degrees who were unsuccessful because they expected this investment alone would carry them; unless you have the wisdom and experience to apply the knowledge, it is still only theory.” John’s face was dumbfounded.

The point to take away here is that mentoring in any category (especially missions) is vital to put feet to theory without having obtained the necessary experience and wisdom, which no one person is capable of having out of the gate. How are mission models sustainable? What are best practices in culture(s)? Where does innovation stamp out tradition, and Bible, innovation? These questions and more are inclusive in how missions’ mentoring has blessed my life and what it is used for. Without mentoring there is no sustainable future for missions; it is inner-circle discipleship that is vital to the work of God. Just take a look at Paul and Timothy’s relationship.

Missions mentoring should include an investment of time, personal connection and friendship, shared resources, and common goals. If the mentee does not desire to take up his/her cross in shared vision, feet will never take flight. They have to be committed in themselves with a teachable spirit, searching for that wisdom. Opposite to this, mentors should have Christian character, be open and sharing, willing to invest time and give opportunity to share their lives, wisdom, and knowledge. There should be more than just leadership here, but a valued relationship. Both should have a sense of readiness and responsiveness toward one another and the work of God, willing to learn from one another.