Passing the baton is an art. Whether it’s the synchronicity of an Olympic relay team, the power transfer from one regime to the next, or the transition of CEO leadership in a major corporation, passing the baton is a challenge. The scriptures are filled with guidance for this delicate task. Moses the deliverer prepared Joshua to lead Israel. Elijah the prophet passed the mantle of power to Elisha. John the Baptist prepared the Jews for the coming Jesus. Jesus the Messiah trained the twelve to evangelize the world. Paul the mentor created a seminary course to train Timothy. Let’s examine these “great transitions” and learn how we can leave a legacy for the next generation.

MOSES AFFIRMS JOSHUA

Moses, God’s chosen deliverer, marched millions of Jews across the sandy desert from slavery to freedom. Then Moses took young Joshua and prepared him to lead the Jews across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Moses instilled confidence and vision in Joshua. Numbers 13 details the account of Israelite spies reporting their findings to Moses on the feasibility of defeating the inhabitants of the Promised Land. Only Caleb and Joshua declared that the conquest of Canaan was doable. The rest of the team only saw the obstacles. Joshua and Caleb only saw the possibilities. Before Joshua was sent to search out Canaan, his name was Hoshea, Hebrew for salvation. After his demonstration of faith and passion in Numbers 14:6-9, Moses gave Hoshea a new name. He called him Joshua, the Hebrew word for “YAHWEH is my salvation.”

PASSING THE BATON

Leaving a Legacy

SCRIPTURE STUDY
Exodus 24:13-14
Numbers 13, 14:6-9
Joshua 1:1-5; 16-17
1 Kings 19:19-21
2 Kings 2:8-15
Matthew 3:11-17; 4:18
Matthew 14:28-31; 16-23
Mark 6:6-13
John 12:24
Acts 2:1-41
1 Timothy 1-6
2 Timothy 1:3-8
2 Timothy 2
2 Timothy 4:6-8; 3: 16-17

PRAYER FOCUS
Dear Jesus,
Give me eyes to see those around me who need my encouragement and care. Help me to listen when you teach me, and to respond obediently. Show me how to successfully “pass the baton” to others.

In Christ’s name,
Amen.
Moses re-named Joshua and affirmed him in his calling to follow him as Israel’s leader. When Moses ascended Mount Sinai, young Joshua was at his side (Exodus 24:13-14). Joshua witnessed first-hand the power and glory of God on Sinai. He marveled at Moses’ shining face. Moses poured into his successor affirmation, acceptance, respect and love. So when it was time to lead Israel across the Jordan to claim the Promised Land, Joshua listened to God and obeyed:

“After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them — to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Joshua 1:1-5 NIV

Moses had confidence in Joshua. So Israel trusted Joshua’s leadership as well. When it came time to cross the Jordan:

“Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you.” Joshua 1:16-17 NIV

- List some people in your life who have accepted, affirmed and respected you. How did their kindness make you feel? What are some things you have been able to accomplish because of their encouragement?

- When did you begin to “own” your own faith? Did you make the transition Hoshea did from “salvation” to “God is my salvation?” What were the circumstances that allowed you to make that leap of faith? If you are still struggling to understand how to know Jesus personally, find a pastor or a mature Christian whom you trust, and ask for their counsel.

- Who are some young Christians that you can encourage? Look for the strengths that you see in their lives. Tell them the ways you see God using them in His work.

**Elijah and Elisha**

The prophet Elisha had some pretty big shoes to fill. Elijah, his “father in the faith,” had called fire down from heaven and single-handedly slaughtered the prophets of Baal. Soon after, God asked Elijah to anoint a young farmer as his successor. (1 Kings 19:19-21) Coincidentally, Elisha also means “My God is my salvation.” Elijah made a great hand-off to Elisha. The prophet’s young protégé witnessed the Divine power and anointing on the ministry of his mentor in 2 Kings 2. Elijah knew his earthly life was about to end. Elisha would not leave his side. The aging prophet said farewell to his faithful attendant and performed one last miracle in 2 Kings 2:8-10:

“Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours…” NIV

Young Elisha witnessed his mentor being taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. The young prophet would not rest until he walked in the same miraculous ministry of Jehovah. Elijah’s “mantle” rested on Elisha in 2 Kings 2:13-15:

“He (Elisha) picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." NIV
Elisha witnessed God’s power in his mentor’s life, so he was hungry for God’s power and anointing to rest on him as well.

- Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha both experienced the miracle of the parting of the waters. In Matthew 14:28-31, Jesus taught Peter about faith by having him walk on water. What observations can you make about God having His people cross over on dry ground in the Old Testament, and Jesus having Peter walk on the sea in the New Testament? What do we learn about faith from these passages?

- How have you seen God’s power manifested in your life? Write down the occasions when you have seen God answer your prayers, or work in the lives of others. Spend some time thanking God for His power and protection.

- Do you have an “Elijah” in your life-someone you know who is walking the Spirit-filled life? What qualities do you see in them? Have you spent time learning from them, experiencing God with them? If you do not have an “Elijah” in your life, ask God to send you someone who can inspire and encourage you.

**John the Baptist Points to Jesus**

The New Testament also gives us models for “successful succession.” John the Baptist was the greatest man who ever lived (according to Jesus in Matthew 11:11). The camel-clothed prophet passed the baton beautifully to the Messiah. The most prominent quality John the Baptist exhibited was humility. He cried that he was not even worthy to carry the sandals of Jesus. (Matthew 3:11) The Son of God asked this self-effacing prophet to baptize Him. John quickly replied that Jesus should baptize him. (Matthew 3:14) Christ answered that He was to be baptized by his cousin “...to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15) This unassuming man not only baptized the Messiah, but witnessed God’s declaration that Jesus was His Son. (Matthew 3:16-17). John the Baptist’s powerful preaching brought many of God’s people to repentance and fertile ground for the Messiah’s message was tilled. John the Baptist was so famous that King Herod himself feared him. John never let the fame and fruit of his ministry go to his head. John was passionate about only one thing: “He must increase and I must decrease.” (John 3:30) If the prophet had been self-serving in any way, the Jews’ transfer of loyalty to the Messiah would have been hindered. But the prophet never wavered. And in the end, Christ said of John:

> “I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.” Matthew 11:11-15 NIV

John the Baptist’s powerful preaching brought many of God’s people to repentance and fertile ground for the Messiah’s message was tilled.

- Do you rejoice when God exalts others around you? Do you envy their blessings and success?

- What does a humble person look like? What are some ways you can “point others to Christ” today?

- When you are praised, do you find time to give that praise back to God?
CHRIST’S ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Of course, Jesus’ entire ministry was spent “passing the torch.” He devoted three and one-half years modeling ministry in front of his disciples. Before ascending into heaven, Christ gave his men marching orders to finish His work and evangelize the world. When it came to Peter, the bumbling disciple needed all the training he could get! Jesus taught impetuous Peter many life lessons. Jesus clarified Peter’s call by asking him to drop his fishing nets and fish for men. (Matthew 4:18) Jesus tested his trust by asking him to walk on the waves of the Galilean sea. (Matthew 14:28) Christ crystallized Peter’s theology when he asked him “Who do men say that I am?” (Matthew 16:16) After Peter declared Jesus’ deity, Christ clarified His mission as the sacrificial lamb offered for the sins of the world. Christ applauded and reproved him in the span of seven verses. (Matthew 16:17-23) Peter saw His Savior glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration and grieving in the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter was at Jesus’ side during the parables, healings and the feeding of the five thousand. (Matthew 14:21) He listened to Jesus pray. (John 17) Jesus gave Peter his first opportunity to stretch his wings in Mark 6:6-13:

“Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” NIV

Jesus was all about on-the-job training. He’d push Peter out of the nest-sometimes he would fly and sometimes he would fall. Christ called him out of the boat-at first he sank, but he eventually walked on the waves. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost (only after Christ had left the earth), Peter would be ignited with Jesus’ passion and power. (Acts 2:1-41)

- Can you identify with Peter? What are some life lessons you can learn from him? What kind of “on-the-job training” have you received from Jesus?

- Can you recall a time in your life when Jesus called you to “walk on water?” What were the circumstances that surrounded your test of faith? Did you find it difficult to keep your eyes on Jesus during that trying time? Why or why not?

- What do you learn about Christ’s patience in training Peter? Do Peter’s failures and victories encourage you in your walk with God?

THE HEART OF A MENTOR

Paul, the apostle, probably gave us the most pragmatic model for making a successful transition in leadership. He penned thirteen New Testament epistles for the sole purpose of helping the fledgling believers in Asia to get on their feet. Paul devoted three pastoral epistles to train young pastors. First and Second Timothy and Titus are still used as the “modus operandi” for Christian ministers. Titus had the daunting task of “straightening out” the carnal Cretan Christians. (Titus 1:5) Timothy was Paul’s “beloved son in the faith.” (2 Timothy 1:1) As Paul encouraged young Timothy with fatherly pride, he gave the young pastor comprehensive counsel on how to worship, how to recognize false teachers, how to select and develop church leaders, how to help the needy, how to teach tithing and how to preach with authenticity and authority. (1 Timothy 1-6)
Paul’s last letter to Timothy was penned in the waning years of his life when he languished in a Roman prison cell. The great apostle had transitioned from the role of power to wisdom. He was no longer on the front lines. However, in hindsight, no one would question the fact that Paul’s most productive years were not planting churches, they were spent writing half of the New Testament. Long after the little church at Thessalonike had disappeared, Paul’s letter to the Thessalonian believers would be a guide for centuries of churches. His doctrinal treatise to the Romans is the clearest theological presentation of the gospel in scripture. But Paul’s heart for people, especially for pastors, gave us a glimpse of the heart of a mentor.

The profound sentiment and intimate tone of Second Timothy resemble the deeply personal words a father would say to his son on his deathbed. Paul wrote that his days were numbered. Paul assured his beloved Timothy that he prayed for him continuously and earnestly (2 Timothy 1:3). That’s what a father in the faith would do. He encouraged Timothy on his spiritual journey by marveling at how much the young pastor had grown (2 Timothy 1:5) and what great potential he had (2 Timothy 1: 6-7). Paul admonished his “Son in the Lord” to be bold in his evangelism (2 Timothy 1: 8), vigilant in doctrine, powerful in preaching, and pure in his personal life. (2 Timothy 2) He confided in Timothy that he felt his time on earth was drawing to a close, but even in those moments, he challenged Timothy with these words in 2 Timothy 4:6-8:

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” NIV

Oh, that we all would have mentors in our lives who would train us so artfully and lovingly! Wait! We do! The Bible is our training manual with complete instructions for “life and godliness.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17) We can learn how to be gentle shepherds of God’s flocks, dynamic leaders to further the kingdom, and powerful preachers of the gospel. That’s not all. We have Jesus living in us in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now we not only know what to do, we have the grace to do it.

- Do you know your spiritual gifts? List them here. Do you already have a ministry? If you do not, how would you like to serve God?

- Do you have a mentor who walks beside you to encourage and admonish you? Were your parents, pastors, or teachers who were mentors for you? Ask God to bring mentors into your life.

- Do you have a young “Timothy” that you can teach? Perhaps your “flock” is your family-your children. Perhaps you know some younger Christians in your church. How can you mentor them today? What are some lessons Paul taught Timothy that would be helpful for those whom you influence?

**THE GOAL OF GROWTH**

God plants the seed of His Word in our hearts. He carefully cultivates it until it grows and bears fruit. The ultimate goal, the greatest fulfillment of His mission is to allow the kernels of corn or the grains of wheat to fall to the earth and die. The new seedling can only grow if the kernel dies. As Jesus proclaimed in John 12:24;

“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” NIV

Successful Christian living is leaving a legacy that transcends time. After all, we are living for eternity!