

## Four Great Ways to Invest in the Lives of Others

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Situated in Northern Italy, the city of Cremona is approximately 27 square miles with a population of around 72,000 people. While Rome, Florence, and Venice top most people's Italian destination goals, Cremona is home to some of the most famous luthiers—the finest violin-makers in the world.

The streets are lined with more than 100 workshops and centers for craftsmen to learn the art and method of the masters, such as Stradivari, del Gesù, and Amati. Those names may not be familiar to you, but they're the gold standard of luthiers, and Cremona is the center of their legacy. The art of violin-making can take more than four years of apprenticeship, and it can take an entire academic year to complete one instrument. The key to making a quality violin is to follow the methods of the old masters.

### **MENTORING: MORE THAN A BUZZ WORD**

In the world of ministry and discipleship, learning from the methods of the masters is often described as mentoring. Over the past 30 years, mentoring has become a buzzword, a program, and in many Christian circles, the question "Who mentored you?" isn't uncommon at all. At times, we've made mentoring a goal to complete or a relationship coordinated by a "matchmaker" who forces two people to connect on a deeper level in a matter of

weeks or months. While some of these approaches are successful, the outcome can feel contrived and temporary.

We can all learn a thing or two from the violin-makers of Cremona when it comes to mentoring in ministry and in the local church. We have a grand craftsman, Christ, who is the example we all follow. Mentoring isn't helping shape another person to be more like you. It's helping shape and form another person into the image of Jesus. It's putting 2 Timothy 2:2 into practice, which says, *"What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

So, where do you start, and what are some tips for shaping the next generation to follow Jesus with their whole hearts, minds, souls, and strength? Here are four suggestions.

### **1. POINT TO GOD'S WORD**

Just as there are basic tools for constructing a musical instrument, God has given you tools to use when mentoring others. The first is God's Word. If you want to help a person look more like Jesus, direct them to read, hear, study, meditate, and memorize Scripture.

Second Timothy 3:16 reminds us, *"All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness."* Being a mentor isn't just about offering advice, although sometimes that's needed. It's more about pointing them to God's truth and giving direction for someone's life.

### **2. PRAY**

The second tool you have is prayer. If you want to mentor someone, pray for them. Pray specifically for their needs, spiritual growth, relationships, and for them to become a person who will continue to

make disciples. When Jesus gave the Great Commission in Matthew 28, He instructed His disciples to make disciples and to remember His presence.

Praying for the person you're mentoring is a reminder of God's work and direction in their life. Pray for the person you're mentoring when you're with them. When you aren't with them in person, pray for them by sending them a prayer or Scripture. Write a note or email them specific ways you're praying and rejoice with them when prayers are answered.

### **3. LEVERAGE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES**

The third tool or tip for mentoring others is life experience. God has uniquely designed your life experiences in a way that you can use both the good and the bad to encourage others. We are reminded in 2 Corinthians 1:4, *"He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God."*

### **4. WORK TOGETHER**

The final tool for mentoring others is ministry opportunities. Mentoring naturally happens when you work alongside someone else for kingdom purposes.

I still remember taking my daughter on an international mission trip. We shared a room with two senior adult women. For a week, my daughter not only shared space with these two women, but she heard them share the gospel, minister to women at an event, and share some distinct cultural differences. I'm grateful for those who not only let us watch them "do" ministry but also ask younger men and women to help and learn in the midst of ministry projects.

### **PLAYING A MASTERPIECE TOGETHER**

I once heard a story of a young man who wanted to learn how to play the violin. As he took lessons, he

had the opportunity to practice on a famous (and very expensive) Stradivarius instrument. Nervous and awkward as he held the bow, a master violinist came behind the novice and placed his hands on top of the apprentice's shaky fingers. He told him, "I will hold your hands and help you play. Together we will play a masterpiece on this masterpiece." The mentor guided the hands of the learner, and together they performed a beautiful song.

You and I have this same opportunity as we mentor others. Let's come beside them, place our lives next to theirs, and build beautiful relationships that last a lifetime.