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Preface

The difference between a good story and a PR stunt is the lasting quality of what is being shared. A good story is always a good one, even when no one reads it. A PR stunt will only be successful when it pleases the masses. I recently read this and it put into words what I always had in mind about my life: I don't want my life to be a PR stunt, in the sense that it will only be successful when people think I am wonderful. I want my life to be a story that is worthwhile, even if nobody would read it.

Life is an art, also when I could not yet put it into words and I knew that I would need help to live it out. Every day we are bombarded with successful PR stunts and before you know it you start to imitate it.

So when I was 27 years old I made a wish list of things I would like to see in a spiritual mother.

It had to be someone I respected because of the way she lived her life. A wise woman who I could not intimidate with my words. God knows me better than I know

myself. I was looking for someone who had walked a tough road, but is still gracious, witty and beautiful.

One year later I sat at a table with Carolyn Ros. After that meeting I went home and I had to cry because she was the exact person I had in mind. Now, four years after that first encounter, I still sit at her table and she sits at mine.

I don't think it is a requirement to be verbally strong, marked by life, gracious, witty and beautiful to be a mentor. I see this as a little joke from God, Who does not always literally answer my prayers, actually no rather than yes; that's why I assumed He thought I could use some wisdom and guidance in my life.

Something like: 'This is so important and if you want Me to provide in your excessive list of demands you will no longer have an excuse to live an orphaned life.'

I honestly believe that the other demands on my list are important for a mentor: that your life compels respect, more than words can do, that you are wise and know God.

When I met with Carolyn I did not really know what to expect. Did I need to give her weekly updates of my life? Or send her prayer requests? Ask her how she was doing? Underneath it all was another of my questions: What does she expect from me? Is it okay what I am doing? As time passes by I understand that she does not

require that I perform. I am not her spiritual mother, it is the other way around. Perhaps the best way to explain this is that she often approaches me. How are you doing, dear heart? Shall we make an appointment? She keeps it very simple, but intentional. This gives me room to discover how I want to be someone's spiritual daughter.

And I think I am not the only one. I see many women around me – in their twenties and thirties – who apparently have an easy life, but they do sense that their life is slowly turning into a PR stunt. We all want a life worth living. The world needs to become a better place for those who come after us. Here are some examples that can be hard: How to relate to our Maker. To be single. To be married. To have a job or not. To be a mom or not. To prioritize. To pray. To build relationships or lose them. To be a family, or to miss one. To belong to a church, or to leave a church. To deal with sickness, trauma, disappointment.

But we need shoulders to stand on, someone who has trodden the grass on a path unknown to us. Somebody we trust to cheer us on, or corrects us. Also, we need to learn to ask for help more often.

I believe Carolyn is not the only one who is happy to lend a shoulder or trod the grass for someone to follow, or to live a life that is worthy to be trusted either in correction or in encouragement. Maybe those people still

need to learn to reach out to the people who really need this.

Let this book be a guide to help you take the steps that you need to take without hesitation. Let it be a story that helps bring people together who have been waiting to find a mentor or be a mentor.

Rinke Verkerk

Journalist

I Introduction

Sitting at my desk, I was aroused out of my concentration by the ringing of my phone. A rather shy voice greeted me, but what I heard was courage. Courage to call and ask to meet up. Courage to acknowledge that life experiences need to be processed in order to make sense of the bigger storyline of life. Courage and boldness are needed to approach an older person. This softened my heart as I was listening with a willing spirit. Willingness in my heart to acknowledge how brave the other person was to reach out to me. And while listening to the person speaking, I tuned in to what the Holy Spirit wanted me to hear and how He wanted me to respond. The initial request was simple, ‘can we meet for coffee?’ I knew that this could be the first step in an adventure, maybe just for one coffee-moment, but also realizing that it could lead to many more moments of listening, evaluating, imparting and letting go. I was determined in my heart to acknowledge the courage that it takes for someone to take this first step. After the

initial contact, the Holy Spirit would make it clear what the process would be.

‘Many people in my generation lack spiritual parents. My own parents were not able to do this and this left a void in my young adulthood. Our times together helped me to stay on track spiritually. You gave motherly/fatherly advice without being emotionally clouded by being the real parent. Thank you for setting the standard and taking the time to walk alongside of me. You modelled the love of Jesus and discipleship so well. I want to mentor others the way I have been mentored.’

A Mentee

‘My generation is in desperate need of spiritual moms and dads.’

A Mentee

There is a cry for ‘spiritual parents’ to come alongside of young believers to empower and equip them in their growth process. There is a need for restoration between the generations. We live in a time where fractured families have cheated the subsequent generations of experiencing authentic, anchored, committed relationships. Each person needs to be noticed and validated in order to build a healthy sense of self-worth and significance. Trai-

ning and modelling need to take place to enable young people to grow in confidence in their responsibilities and achievements, knowing that someone believes that they have what it takes to succeed. The question remains whether or not the subsequent generations can learn how to work together. A tremendous blessing is released when each generation intentionally helps the next one to discover their God-given identity and purpose in life.

This process is not about helping build one's clientele or increasing one's name recognition. We have relegated compassion and care to the professionals when maybe all that is needed is a shoulder to lean on; a cup of tea and time; a listening ear and a listening heart; someone to be available to be a sounding board. Mentoring is a pay-it-forward model of enabling and equipping others on their journey of growth. So much of our society is based on the premise of: 'what do I get out of this?' 'What advantage does it give me?' 'Why would I invest time and energy in someone without being paid for it?' In the ensuing chapters, I hope to address some of these issues. I will also be sharing some of the 'pearls of wisdom' that I have been accumulating along the way. My prayer is that this will be a voyage of discovery of the enormous blessing that is released when the generations work together. No monetary amount can be attached to seeing the next generation take steps of faith, steps of courage, steps of hope.

II Explanation of the title

Life is like a relay-race.

A relay race is an event where a team of four athletes run equal predetermined distances in a sprint race, each passing a rod-like object called the ‘baton’ to the next person to continue the race. The strategy is to create a team of the fastest runners. The success of the team depends on each one doing their part. The team of athletes are interconnected and reliant upon the skills of the previous runner. Each runner must be prepared to pass the baton on to the next one in line, while continuing to run after the baton has been passed on.

The interaction of ‘passing on’ and ‘receiving’ the baton serve as an illustration of how one generation is poised to pass on to the next valuable life principles. This requires a certain rhythm , a certain dance in life. It requires agility, training, endurance, clarity of purpose and vision. It requires an understanding of how a team works and how generations thrive when they are

interconnected. In the race, each athlete is facing forward, running into the future. Mentoring others is a valuable way of how each generation has something to pass on to the next. It is not about who is the strongest or most successful as the victory belongs to the whole team.

The Bible calls us to fulfill this mandate:

Ephesians 4:12 'Equipping the saints for the work of service to the building up of the Body of Christ.'

2 Timothy 2:2 'The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.'

III What is mentoring?

'I really appreciated the time you took to mentor me. You saw my potential and calling. You were patient and used encouraging words. Sharing your own life experiences helped me to hear God better for myself. You gave such compassionate input that was very life giving and authentic. You are not quick to judge or try to give the right solutions. You do not tell people what they should do but you walk along side of them. You provide a shoulder to lean on which gave a safe place to share my fears and my questions. Together we could look for answers.'

A Mentee

Mentoring is God's tool to develop disciples. As a noun, a mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor. As a verb it means 'to advise' or 'to train'. This is a voluntary relational process between a more mature, knowledgeable, skilled person and one who is eager to learn in an intentional way. Maturity is not age-related. In this

relational process one person empowers the other by transferring his/her resources of insight, values and connection to the other.

‘We wanted a mentor to ask us the tough questions that we would not ask ourselves. We can accomplish much together with the Holy Spirit but sometimes we need an outside perspective to help shine light on our weak areas. We also wanted a place where we could come without questions and get another perspective, be challenged so that we could work things out together.’ - A Mentee

Every Christian who is serious about his/her faith should be involved in this process of both mentoring and being mentored. Growth happens when we invite others into our journey and also come alongside others on their journey. This process can be compared to a lake that is thriving with vegetation and fish because of the flow of fresh water coming into the lake and also flowing out of the lake. A lake with only input but no output will soon become stagnant.

‘It is healthy for everyone to have a mentor. These are people who help you reflect and process the things that have happened. It is also helpful to share my struggles and receive wisdom.’ - A Mentee

The purpose of spiritual mentoring is to enhance one's relationship with God. It will also help the mentee to recognize how God is already at work in his/her life. This offers the opportunity to grow in character while having a sounding board to deal with some habits or challenges that one wants to see changed in one's life.