

Applying the Pauline Method of Mentorship to Pharmacy

by Geoffrey & Cortney Mospan



1 Timothy 6:11-12 (ESV) *“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”*¹

As we started our careers in academia, we reflected on our experiences during pharmacy school and residency. Throughout this time, we were blessed with several mentors who helped develop us into the pharmacists and educators we are today. Realizing that we are now in the position of assuming the role of mentor, we place great importance on fulfilling this role. But what reference is available to use for instruction on mentorship, and specifically a Christian example?

In the springtime, our personal mentor pointed out a biblical example for mentorship that we could use while working with students at our respective colleges. He illustrated that what we are doing with our students is similar to Paul and how he used a younger man, Timothy, to continue his ministry. After reviewing Paul and Timothy’s relationship, we realized pharmacists can apply the Pauline method of mentorship to their everyday practice.

Paul and Timothy’s Background

Paul, arguably the most prolific leader in Christianity’s history other than Jesus Christ, was a Roman citizen. He was born in Tarsus, the principal city of Cilicia, in Asia Minor. Paul was born into a prominent, wealthy, and devout Jewish family.² His father was a member of the ancient tribe of Benjamin, and his family belonged to the Pharisee sect of Judaism; a belief that following God meant strict obedience to the laws of Moses with exact detail.^{2,3}

Paul played a role as a witness consenting to the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. He then received an official commission from the high priest in Jerusalem to travel to Damascus and to Syria to arrest, imprison, and execute Christians who had fled the city under persecution. It was on the road to Damascus that Paul had a vision where he saw Jesus and received the Gospel, and was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles.^{2,3}

During Paul’s first missionary journey in Lystra, he met a young man named Timothy.¹ Timothy knew the Old Testament scriptures from his mother who was Jewish, and he also had Greek heritage. Timothy came to faith in Jesus Christ when he met Paul. From here, their special relationship grew as Paul began mentoring Timothy to continue his work in spreading the Gospel. As Paul’s right hand man, Timothy joined Paul during his ministry including Paul’s second missionary journey.¹

Pauline Mentorship

Much can be learned from Paul’s mentorship of Timothy. Spreading the Gospel during the first century A.D. was certainly a daunting task, and Timothy’s training was an integral part of his success. In the *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, Stacy Hoehl writes of several characteristics seen in Paul’s mentoring of Timothy.⁴

“A Treasured Relationship”

Paul and Timothy shared more than a common bond in Jesus – they were also friends and traveling companions. Paul was like a father-figure to Timothy and often referred to him as “my true child in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2) or “my beloved child” (2 Tim 1:2).^{1,4} In *Philippians 2:22*, Paul says, “But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.” Such a deep relationship was crucial for Timothy as he continued Paul’s ministry.⁴

“The Right Person for the Job”

Timothy’s good reputation in Lystra (*Acts 16:2*), trait of godliness, and sincere faith (2 Tim 1:5) made him an ideal mentee for Paul.¹ During his second imprisonment in Rome, Paul knew his time was near and understood the importance of identifying persons to continue his work. In *Second Timothy 2:1-2*, Paul said to Timothy, “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me

in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” In this verse, Paul serves as a role model to Timothy to do as he did and mentor other believers.⁴

“Equipped for the Task/Employed for Effectiveness”

In order for him to carry on Paul’s mission, Timothy needed appropriate guidance. The most obvious examples of this are the First and Second Letters of Paul to Timothy. As part of the Pastoral Epistles, these letters provide practical instruction for Timothy. Furthermore, Timothy was often sent to other churches on behalf of Paul (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:19; 1 Thess. 3:2), including serving as pastor in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3).^{1,4}

“Empowered for Success”

Throughout his letters, Paul encouraged Timothy and provided words of affirmation several times.^{1,4} In *Philippians 2:20-21* Paul says of Timothy, “For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.” In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul inspires Timothy to stay strong in his faith: “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God.” By showing and providing support, Paul was able to empower Timothy.^{1,4}

Application to Pharmacy

“A Treasured Relationship”

Without realizing, pharmacists and pharmacy faculty can start to develop a mentor role as Paul had with Timothy. In practice and in the classroom, students frequently “see” something in their mentor that they connect or identify with, such as a common practice interest, a special skill for patient counseling, or something within the person themselves. Finding such a mentor relationship isn’t always easy. While the best mentorships are often organic and occur naturally, pharmacists need to constantly be vigilant for students whom they can mentor. Student pharmacists are sometimes afraid to approach their educators outside of the classroom; but as new practitioners, we can personally attest to how our lives, careers, and ability to care for others were significantly enriched by the mentors we met along our educational journey.

By investing in student pharmacists and new practitioners, you can enrich the next

generation to care for patients just as Paul enabled Timothy to disciple unbelievers in expanding the Kingdom. While we can enable those younger than us to use their profession as opportunities to minister, the greatest value of adopting the Pauline Method is development of a compassionate pharmacist who will seek to improve patients' health while also continuing to "pay it forward".

"The Right Person for the Job"

As pharmacists, it is critical that we are constantly vigilant for these opportunities. The profession of pharmacy is a huge opportunity for ministry; the patients we serve as well as the students we educate are our mission field. By investing in student pharmacists and new practitioner pharmacists, we are enabling the next generation to find their passion and to use the profession of pharmacy to bless others. Seek out students who seem to have a genuine interest, are excited about your practice area, or students who may seem to be struggling with coursework or even outside life factors.

While it may be easiest to mentor students in clinical practice experiences due to the intensive time spent together and the one-on-one environment, attempt to seek out students early in their pharmacy educational career. If you advise students or a student organization, consider opening your home to these students or meeting them for coffee or dinner somewhere. The ability to see a pharmacist or faculty member outside of the pharmacy arena and in one's personal life can pay huge dividends to a student's ability to appropriately balance professional and personal life demands while also learning how to integrate the two.

Keep in mind Paul's background – he was part of the early persecution of the church. Not all pharmacy students start off on the right foot and some may have professionalism issues that make them a challenging student to mentor or even witness to. As a young faculty member, this is a very familiar and relevant experience for us. If you trust your ability to help change their mindset and approach, that student may be transformed into a leader and a huge advocate for the profession in the future.

"Equipped for the Task/Employed for Effectiveness"

Student pharmacists are bombarded throughout pharmacy school with heavy educational demands, which makes many hesitant to take on extra responsibility.

Further, students frequently aren't aware of the opportunities that exist for them to serve patients in unique projects, to care for underserved populations, or professional opportunities to advance their careers that align with their passions. Share opportunities for scholarship, educational opportunities, and the value of engagement and service with students. While students need to "own" their career and seek out opportunities, you may be the spark when you encourage a student to run for a national office or to start volunteering at a senior center or free clinic. Professors who did this for us left a lasting footprint on the people and pharmacists that we are today.

"Empowered for Success"

Students can become easily discouraged, and many initiatives will require persistence, dedication, and passion in order to see them come to fruition. Paul's unwavering devotion to the church and advancement of the gospel due to his faith in Christ is an incredible example. When thinking about the benefit that others will see from such devotion, one is less likely to become discouraged. Be the flame for students – support them through challenging professional moments and let them see your perseverance and dedication to patients, service, and mentorship. As a student develops throughout your mentorship, a key factor that can frequently be forgotten is equipping them to become mentors themselves. Engage students in discussions of the "why" (why you chose to mentor, what the value is, how it has enriched your life) as well as the "how" (by providing them strategies to effectively mentor, creating opportunities for them to become a mentor to younger leaders in student organizations or during clinical education if introductory pharmacy practice experiences [IPPEs] and advanced pharmacy practice experiences [APPEs] are at the same site).

It has been said, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about." (Wendy Mass, *The Candymakers*). As pharmacists, we are entrusted to a glimpse of the battle that our patients are facing. We see the man with congestive heart failure who is taking 20 different medications and desperately needs our help to educate and schedule dosing. We see the lady with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease who is still smoking. She needs our intervention, and she also needs our compassion. As Christians, we want others to see Jesus in us. The only way that our patients are going to see Jesus in us is if we see them as Jesus sees them. He sees them as His child. He sees

them as the one He created. He sees them as His priority.

Conclusion

By closely examining Paul's relationship with Timothy, pharmacists can receive a biblical example on effective mentorship and adequately prepare students or other new practitioner pharmacists for their careers. †

References

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Dr. Geoffrey Mospan is an Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at Wingate University School of Pharmacy at the Hendersonville Campus. He graduated from Ohio Northern University Raabe College of Pharmacy and completed an ASHP Accredited PGY-1 at the University of Toledo Medical Center. Dr. Mospan rounds with the Inpatient Family Medicine Service at Pardee Hospital. His classroom teaching includes the topics of pharmacy law, internal medicine, and pain pharmacotherapy. In his spare time, Dr. Mospan enjoys the outdoors, sports, and reading.

Dr. Courtney Mospan is an Assistant Professor of Pharmacy Practice at East Tennessee State University Bill Gatton College of Pharmacy. She graduated from Ohio Northern University Raabe College of Pharmacy and completed an ASHP-APhA Accredited PGY-1 Community Care Pharmacy Practice Residency at The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy. Dr. Mospan provides clinical pharmacy services at Mooney's Discount Pharmacy in Johnson City, TN. She also precepts student pharmacists for various outreach events in the Northeast Tennessee community. Dr. Mospan teaches self-care, management, advocacy, and community pharmacy related topics. In her free time, Dr. Mospan enjoys traveling, hiking, and serving her community.