As a Servant leader, one of the best qualities you can possess is the ability to instill the principles of Servant leadership into those that follow you. Training future and current leaders may take many processes and cannot happen overnight. However, taking the time to teach and model great values for your staff such as a desire to serve, the ability to be empathetic, and the knowledge of how to motivate your team members will produce significant returns for your individual staff members and the organization. This is the work of a mentor. Being a mentor can sometimes be lost in terms, such as “manager” or even “coach,” but mentors are a valuable tool to many workplaces. As a Servant leader, it is important to also mentor new and tenured employees to ensure that they are getting the boost they need to be their best at work and in life.

In this lesson, we will discuss four (4) aspects of being a mentor: 1. the need for establishing goals, 2. discerning when to give praise and when to give criticism to your staff, 3. the importance of creating a supportive environment and, 4. the value of creating an open-door policy.

A Question to Consider:

In what ways do you intentionally, strategically, and consistently mentor your new and tenured staff members?
Establishing Goals & Praise or Criticism:

One of the best tools a mentor can give to their staff members is the ability to establish and set goals for themselves. Start by asking the employee what they want to achieve and how they want to reach it. When working with a team, leaders should ensure that each member has their own set of goals, and then integrate those goals with the team as a whole. This ensures that everyone has a personal goal to work toward on their own, as well as goals to work on with the rest of the team. Goals help everyone stay focused and can make them feel valued as an individual. In order to help your team member set goals, you must be aware of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Hopefully you have gained this information from conversations with the person as well as from your observations of their work.

As a leader and a mentor, it can be difficult to discern when an employee should receive helpful criticism, be reprimanded, or when open praise will be an effective tool. Praise and compliments are a great tool for building confidence in employees, but too much can lose its luster. Employees that are over praised may begin to lose faith in what their mentor is saying and lose the desire to work hard for that well-earned praise. On the other hand, employees that are over criticized, or as we discussed last week, excessively criticized, may lose self-confidence and pride in their work, creating more errors and low productivity. Constructive criticism can be a helpful tool in management when it is used correctly. However, simply delivering criticism to staff members without any form of evaluation or plan for improvement is damaging to the employee and the confidence he or she brings to their work. Because of this, Servant leaders should review any form of praise or criticism before they deliver it to the staff person and determine if it will ultimately be helpful to them.

Biblical Case Study: Elisha Reprimands Gehazi~2 Kings 5:19-27

There was an official from the Syrian army named Naaman. He was a great man but he had a condition known as leprosy. He found out that he could be healed of leprosy if he was able to meet with the president of the training college of their time, Elisha. Naaman came to meet Elisha and after following his instructions to dip in the Jordan River seven times, Naaman was healed of his leprosy. To show his gratitude, Naaman offer Elisha a gift but Elisha refused to take any gifts from Naaman. Gehazi, Elisha’s assistant, heard this conversation and decided that his boss made a mistake. Gehazi took matters into his own hands but this caused him to be reprimanded by Elisha. Here are some take away points from this lesson on how to address a serious matter with an employee:

1. Gehazi went after Naaman and said that his ________ sent him to ask for some gifts to support other students in the training school from Mt Ephraim. (vv. 21-22)
2. When Gehazi returned to the Citadel he ____________ the gifts from his director and everyone else. (v. 24)
3. When Gehazi went to stand before Elisha, he asked Gehazi where he had been. Gehai was not honest but Elisha knew it and directly ________ Gehazi. (v. 24-26)
Creating a Supportive Environment & Creating an Open-Door Policy:

In order to mentor your staff effectively and bring the team together, a leader must be able to create a supportive environment in which to work. After all, employees do not want to feel like the workplace is a place that should be feared or only generates criticism and humiliation. A Servant leader should act as a mentor by creating an environment that is safe and supportive to employees, where they do not fear you or other employees. Visiting with the team members periodically is useful in creating this environment as you build a sense of comfort, community, and trust. Let the employees know that you are available if they need you and take time to speak with them if you are approached. Your staff members will appreciate the support and in turn will feel confident that they are not alone in the office.

Whether you are mentoring a new employee or an entire new group, one of the first things to establish is an open-door policy for the office. Let your employees know they can come to you with any problems or concerns they are having—or even with positive ideas they want to share. Seeing someone as a leader can be intimidating or downright scary, so assure employees that you are there for them and want to support them in their goals and challenges. Give them ways to reach out to you, whether it is in your office, by phone or by email. While it is essential for you as a Servant leader to have an open-door policy, it is as equally important for you to establish boundaries indicating the best times and methods to reach out to you. Setting and communicating clear boundaries is essential to leadership.

Biblical Case Studies: Barnabas brings Paul to Antioch~Acts 11:22-26

The early Church was rapidly growing and expanding outside of the precincts of Jerusalem as promised by Jesus as recorded in Acts 1:8. Unfortunately, the stoning of the Deacon Stephen was one of the vehicles to cause newly converted Christians to leave Jerusalem and go out as far as Antioch. When the Disciples of Jesus received news that a vibrant faith community was emerging in Antioch, they sent Barnabas, a faithful and devoted leader to see what was happening. Barnabas, which means the “son of encouragement” was known for his gift of exhortation and coaching other disciples. When he arrived in Antioch, he discovered that this new corps was growing by leaps and bounds as the Lord added much people. Then Barnabas demonstrated the ability to recognize an opportunity to develop and advance another: Paul of Tarsus. Paul had his conversion experience on the road to Damascus and was now fully committed to the call of Christ. Yet, he needed mentoring and practice in this new life. Barnabas found him in Tarsus and brought Paul to help him serve the church at Antioch. Let us examine some principles of mentoring:

1. Barnabas was a ________ leader that the Council in Jerusalem could trust. (v. 22)
2. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he _________ the people that they might cleave more to God. (v. 23)
3. Barnabas recognized that he needed help and went to ________ to get Paul. (v. 25)
4. Barnabas mentored Paul in Antioch for a _________ by allowing him to teach and lead. (v. 26)
5. Due to the leadership of Barnabas, Paul and other leaders the disciples at Antioch were called ________ first. (v. 26)
A Thought to Ponder:

Research shows that mentoring programs help to reduce turnover and increase retention in organizations.

A Thought: In what way/s do you informally and/or formally mentor your team members? What additional resources from an organizational standpoint would assist you in becoming a stronger mentor?

What Difference Would It Make:

What methods do you use to help your team members set professional and personal goals?

What type of behaviors or practices on your team deserve praise and recognition and what types require reprimand or constructive criticism?

What are 3-5 ways in which you intentionally and strategically create a supportive environment for your staff?

What are the boundaries you have in place for your accessibility to your team? How have you communicated those procedures?

Suggested Resources:

Leadership Style of Jesus
By Dr. Michael Youssef
https://www.amazon.com/Leadership-Style-Jesus-Qualities-Shepherd/dp/0896931684?ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1510262210&sr=8-1&keywords=leadership+style+of+jesus

Boundaries for Leaders
by Dr. Henry Cloud
https://www.amazon.com/Boundaries-Leaders-Results-Relationships-Ridiculously/dp/0062206338/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1510262129&sr=8-1&keywords=boundaries+for+leaders