

Why You Should Pray for God to Send a 'Paul' Your Way

One is a pharmaceutical salesman. The other is an audiologist.

One enjoys watching sports. The other doesn't own a TV.

One has teenagers at home. The other is an empty-nester.

They live three states and over 600 miles apart.

What do these two men have in common, other than a shared faith in Jesus Christ?

They're my "Paul." And I'm their "Timothy." And they've both devoted many long hours to pointing me to Jesus, holding me accountable in my Christian walk, encouraging me when I've needed encouragement and correcting me when I've needed correction.

I remember several years ago when my wife and I were going through a rough patch in our marriage. It was so bad that we briefly considered separating. We'd been to marriage counseling together and it just wasn't working. The more we attended counseling, the greater the friction.

One day it finally reached a point when she told me not to come home from work. I remember pulling off the side of the road and calling my mentor—the empty-nester, non-TV-watching audiologist—to air out all my grievances with the woman I'd married more than 13 years earlier.

Hoping to elicit sympathy and understanding, I rattled on and on before my mentor stopped me in my tracks. What he said next wasn't what I wanted to hear but what I *needed* to hear. It saved my marriage because I followed his advice. It went something like this: "I want you to go straight home, go into a room with your wife, lock the door, pray together and work

this out, even if it takes all night. And I want you to pray non-stop in the car until you get home. Cry out to God in a loud voice, pray in the Holy Spirit and ask God to soften your heart, and be the man and the husband He's called you to be!"

Ouch. Boom. Mic drop. Here's the thing, though: This mentor—who I'll refer to as "Bob"—wasn't telling me anything he hadn't personally lived. About 20 years earlier, when he was around the same age, he and his wife endured an equally dark season in marriage. But through prayer and humbling themselves before God, reconciliation occurred. It's also important to note that while Bob was on the phone with me that day, his wife was on the phone with my wife and the advice being passed along was very similar (although in a gentler tone).

Just recently, my other mentor (who is actually a friend of "Bob" because they used to serve together on the same church council before Bob moved to pursue a ministry calling) provided me with equally critical advice after I told him I'd been playing out a worst-case scenario in my mind involving a loved one. He reminded me to "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5, MEV). I'd read this verse before, but it had never resonated like it did in that moment. It helped me shift my focus and "be transformed by the renewing of my mind..." (Rom. 12:2).

I could give countless other examples of times when my mentors—both of whom I met at church through God-ordained encounters over a decade ago—have been there for me, but that's not really the point. The point is that just like Timothy (and me), you need a Paul to remind you to "watch your life and doctrine closely" (1 Tim. 4:16, NIV) and to study God's Word so you'll be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17).

The Lord never intended for us to walk through this life alone and as wonderful as corporate worship gatherings can be, they are no substitute for one-on-one spiritual mentoring and discipleship.

So who's your Paul? Who's the person you can count on to offer you encouragement and correction when you need it? There's a reason I have *two* mentors: I figure the more godly input I can have in my life, the less likely I'll be to fall into sin and get knocked down by one of the curveballs life throws us.

If you don't already have a "Paul" in your life, pray that God will send one your way. And be proactive about finding one; it'll be one of God's greatest blessings. {eoa}

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