

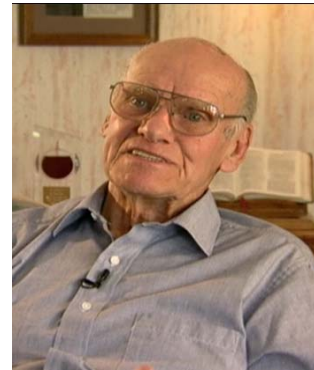
Int'l Mentoring Newsletter

Great Mentors I Have Known:

CHARLIE RIGGS, PACESETTER

by Dr. Waylon B. Moore

My first lesson from mentor Charlie Riggs was the way he handled a major crisis. A Texas millionaire, interested in the follow-up ideas he had heard from Dawson Trotman, had offered to support someone to teach discipleship and spiritual growth for three years in Ft. Worth. On that promise Charlie was asked to move to Texas.



Ever have a toilet that runs constantly? After straining in vain about two hours to fix our commode's problem, I called the plumber. He grabbed a tool that I didn't know existed and easily fixed the washer, the leak and the handle in roughly 5 minutes. (I had to pay him for the whole hour!)

I just had to ask how he knew exactly what to do. He said: "I learned while working as a teenager for a neighbor who was a plumber. I did the dirty stuff, digging and going under houses; the preparation. Then I watched him finish the job. I saw that knowing what worked and having the right tools was essential. It took time, observing him, getting exhorted every hour about something, 'til I did it the right way — his way. Finally I took tests and got my own license."

The fastest way to learn a skill or craft is to see it modeled. To do hands-on work, carefully observed by an expert. Imparting ministry and lifestyle skills through mentoring is still an essential ingredient in making disciples of Christ.

The Greatest Pacesetter

Jesus knew the power of example. He came to earth and plunged into the culture and life of a Jewish state, living in the Roman world, as a carpenter. He lived daily for 3 years with 12 men. Jesus modeled all that He wanted these disciples to be and do. Jesus commanded: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19). He was not afraid of leading. Nor was he convinced that lone-rangers could learn from Him at a distance. He invited fellowship again: "Come to me, all of you who toil and carry burdens and I, yes I, will lead you into rest. Put on my yoke and learn from me. . . ." (Matthew 11:28-29, Williams Translation). Jesus got up-close and personal. "He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). Jesus wanted them "with Him" first, to share his life. Then He sent them to preach, to share his ministry. Life first; ministry second.

The Apostle Paul carefully imitated his master. All through his New Testament letters, Paul reminds the converts of what he DID as well as what he said around them. He commands the churches to “follow me as I follow Christ.” He uses three descriptive Greek words for “follow” that mean: to “come behind,” to “mimic” or “copy,” and to “pursue.” We mark others deeply through modeling, setting a sharp pace.

Meeting Daws Trotman

I had met Dawson Trotman during the Billy Graham Crusade in Ft. Worth. He had agreed to give Billy 6 months to sharpen the counseling and follow-up for those hundreds making spiritual decisions during the month long Graham Crusades. Daws pioneered new concepts in nurture and up-graded Graham’s total ministry impact for decades. I heard Daws speak on Acts 17:11 at a church. I met him, lined him up to speak at the Seminary, and offered to drive him anywhere he needed on Monday, when Seminary didn’t meet. I had borrowed an auto to link up with Daws, and found ways to be with him through the rest of the Graham Crusade. We prayed together, and He invited me to Westmont College in California where he would be speaking to the staff of the Navigators for 10 days. I hitch-hiked the 1,500 miles there. Daws was the “starter” of a whole new Christian life-style for me. I began to memorize scripture, have daily quiet time, and a new kind of Bible Study. He asked me to be of assistance to a couple coming to work in Ft. Worth, Charlie and LaRue Riggs.

Who is Charlie Riggs?

Charlie was saved when he was 15 years old on a Sunday night. He had no follow-up help at all after that personal decision. He coasted spiritually, working in the oil fields, and other work until he was 25.

In WWII Charlie was promoted through the ranks from private to First Lieutenant. Eventually he did the work of an Army Colonel in Seattle, Washington till war ended. During that time he learned the “how’s” of discipleship with the Navigators and their key man there, Lorne Sanny, who had a training base in his home.

Being mentored by Lorne Sanny super-charged his spiritual life. The discipline and total commitment that marked his Army life meshed with his personal devotion to Christ. He really grew spiritually during those tough war years, and lived in the household with the Lorne Sanny family. The Navigators, when possible, trained their workers in an “alongside” ministry situation just as Jesus did the 12. A person can grow more rapidly that way. Nothing can stay hidden long that needs changing in one’s life. Charlie and the guys in training lived on the bottom floor below the Sanny family, while the girls there were on the 3rd floor. Charlie soon noticed pretty LaRue. She was artistic, sparkly, and spiritually hungry. With the war over, Charlie attended college for 3 years, and married LaRue. Charlie was invited to begin Navigator ministry in Ft. Worth, where I was going to Southwestern Seminary.

Meeting Charlie Riggs

Charlie Riggs modeled that life of a Christian soldier before some young men in Texas in the 1950’s. God marked our hearts for eternity through Charlie’s life and words. I had the privilege of observing and learning from this great pacesetter. One day the Riggs arrived after traveling 3,000 miles in an old car that included little Danny, smaller Bobby, and Loretta about ready to be born. I had them stay in my little apartment and I found a place to stay for a while.

My first lesson from mentor Charlie was the way he handled a major crisis. A Texas millionaire, interested in the follow-up ideas he had heard from Daws Trotman, had offered to support someone to teach discipleship and spiritual growth for three years in Ft. Worth. On that promise Charlie was asked to move to Texas.

When he had his first meeting with the wealthy man, Mr. Fleming backed out of his promise! He offered instead to pay the Riggs' way back to Seattle! Charlie was in shocked surprise. He had prayed for days about this move across America to this new ministry, and believed God had led them to Ft. Worth. He thanked Mr. Fleming, but said that God had led them, and would meet their needs.

When Charlie told us the news, we were also perplexed to know what was happening. We all prayed together. Charlie spent some time alone with the Lord. Then began looking for work. I made my tiny two rooms available to them, and we began praying for a place they could rent and for guidance where Charlie should work. The Riggs family linked hearts with Jesus' promise: "When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice." (John 10:4). God was faithful in meeting the Riggs' immediate needs in that tough time of adjustment. I've never forgotten Charlie and LaRue's sticking to God's guidance, and seeing Him begin a strong ministry in Texas through the Riggs. "Never doubt in the dark, what God told you in the light." Charlie founded a Navigator home, with several single guys. I was part of everything except living there. Later living in Dallas, Charlie was asked to work for a member of the Billy Graham team as a helper in Houston. I went there also.

A loving, caring husband and dad

I've had the privilege of observing Charlie in his home, work, and ministry. He set the pace for Christ. We're still in touch monthly. A life-time of friendship is God's bonus from my being open to learn from Charlie. I was a hungry young single in the 50's. Charlie impressed me modeling love and genuine tenderness and care for his wife and children. I'd not seen that up close outside my family's rather threatening environment. As a Seminary student trying to learn everything, I didn't realize some life lessons would come packaged in presents I didn't expect. God knew how desperately I needed models of dad's who touched and played with their children; men that treasured their wives. I hadn't experienced much of that growing up. Charlie was a "family man" playing with the kids, and his love for LaRue blossomed everywhere in small and large examples. He was a hard worker providing for family needs with little income. Charlie remains a supreme model to me at a critical time in my growing spiritual life. God layered other mentors of good family living through Bob Foster, Gordon Donaldson, and some fellow students who were married with families. My heart was shaped about marriage seeing God's word lived out before me. God's mentor-models can be life altering.

A faithful man

When Charlie was asked to be a "handy man" for Jerry Bevins, Coordinator-Director of the Graham Crusades Charlie's servant-heart said "yes." He cheerfully did janitor-type work, the get-dirty jobs, and with enthusiasm. He never quit because of some problem. He stuck, solved the problem, and finished. Charlie's goal with any job was to do it the best it could be done. I was in four Graham Crusades with Charlie and saw how God used this quiet, diligent servant. Charlie did it all, running errands, unloading, and setting out hundreds of chairs. I recall the Houston

Crusade with Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. I helped Charlie count, number, and flag all the seats at Rice Stadium. I was by his side a few days each for some of the Crusades in Houston, then later in England, Amsterdam, and Berlin.

Charlie attended two universities, but his “graduate degree” was from the “University of 2 Timothy 2:2,” Faithful, Able/Available, Teachable. People saw a trim, wiry, balding man with a New York accent who talked more in short sentences than paragraphs. Charlie had that rare quality of faithfulness to a task, a vision. Dr. Jerry Bevens saw it, and couldn’t do without him. Army General, King David complained in desperation: “Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men...” (Psalm 12:1, 2). When the Graham team was invited to hold Crusades in England, Bevens surprised the Team requesting that Charlie also be allowed to come too!

In England, away from their families for months, Charlie did multiple tasks. His worth and abilities were slowly understood and noticed. Later he was asked to teach and train counselors how to witness. Still later he became a Team Member. Charlie eventually led the Graham Team’s Counseling-Follow-Up “birthing” ministry for decades. He and those he mentored, in turn, trained pastors and laymen in dozens of countries. Around the world for more than 40 years, thousands got saved, grew in Christ, counseled inquirers, and applied what they had learned from Charlie in their churches. Over a million came to Christ who were counseled personally. Why did God use this quiet guy, a roughneck oil-field worker so mightily? I’ve heard Charlie’s prayers: “for Christ to get all the glory and honor.” I can understand why God gave him the responsibility for the training of more people in this follow-up ministry than any other person alive.

How Charlie mentored others

Charlie was there as my best man when I married. By telephone and letter, he continued to keep up with me, encouraging, mentoring, impacting me. He was brutally honest, direct, sharing with me a need he saw in my life. He “nailed me” privately. He would also complement me and stretch me to be more for Christ. What a consistent pace setter. He had something always to share that was fresh from his time alone with God. He sought to apply verses to life. The Scriptures became so alive around Charlie. Even after retirement he continued to mentor men, and be available for those he had known for decades. God gave me a life-time encourager when I was open to learn and be mentored. Are you open?

One of the major things I learned from Charlie was a week-by-week, inductive Bible study. We began to study books of the Bible, chapter by chapter . . . seeking personal application of a single verse a week. We learned to answer four simple questions that Daws Trotman used. This method of Bible study became the most important single tool I’ve used with small groups of men, to get them into the Scriptures with growth, and change. These four questions work with a verse, a passage, or a chapter. What does it say? What does it say I don’t understand? What does it say elsewhere? What does it say to me? [Full instructions](#) and a [sample study blank](#) are available at: www.mentoring-disciples.org .

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