

Backwards I talk. Yoda, you need. Yoda, I'm not. You don't need the animated puppet from the Star Wars movies. But you do need a mentor, a coach, a spiritual leader, someone that you can look up who can help you find your way through life, someone shoulders you can stand on. The book of Hebrews tells us that the early Christians stood on the shoulders of the Old Testament heroes of the faith. We need our own faith heroes. Who do you say that you want to be like? Who sets the standards that you aspire too? Whose blessing do you see? Who is helping you learn how to walk by faith and not by sight? That person is your spiritual Yoda.

If you have a spiritual Yoda, that person makes a difference in your life. Jesus certainly did for the disciples. Listen to what the book of Acts tells us about Peter and John after Jesus' ascension. *"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4:13 NLT) The time the disciples spent with Jesus made a difference in their lives. Jesus can make a big difference for us, too.

Peter and Paul were two leaders in the early church who mentored new Christians and led people to faith. But they were two very different people. Peter was interpersonal and experiential. He did not have a formal education; but he did learn from Jesus and from a wide variety of experience. Paul was highly educated and cultural. These two men approached faith, life and ministry in very different ways. But they were both committed to the same Lord Jesus Christ.

We may have a number of Yoda's in our life time and they certainly will not all be the same. One of the things that we need to learn from mentors is how to distinguish the good from the bad; how to discern whether something is from God or not. Wise mentors also help us learn which battles in life are worth fighting and which are not.

That is why it is important to choose your mentor wisely. The best mentor is not necessarily the person at the very top. Many times these people are too busy or too wrapped up in their own world to be able to help or guide someone else. The best mentor may not be the best at something, but the person with the most passion. Some of the best coaches are not great players, but great students of their sport.

When it comes to selecting your "Spiritual Yoda," your "Peter or Paul of faith," you need to look for someone who will guide you in your relationship with God, someone who will help you grow in grace. A true Christian mentor will help you live in a way that you are connected with God. You have to be very careful when you are looking for that person, because there are a lot of people claiming that they can help guide you on your spiritual journey and saying that they will even use Jesus as one of your guides. Look out! Oprah has promoted Eckhart Tolle as a spiritual

guide and held weekly on line discussions about his book, “A New Earth.” Tolle uses the words of Jesus as part of his presentation. But watch out because he twists and turns the words of Jesus to say things that Jesus never said. We could find a number of other examples of “Preachers” who distort God’s word and mislead people. Be careful!

Here are some things to look at when searching for a “Spiritual Yoda.”

1. How do they treat their spouse? You can learn a lot about a person by the way that they treat the person closest to them. If they treat their spouse with respect, if they honor them as a partner, if they are faithful and true to them, then they may be a worthy mentor.
2. Are their children welcome in their office? Do they make room for their family in all aspects of their life? Obviously there are some occupations where it is neither wise nor safe to have children around. But a person who is too busy to take a call from his son or daughter, who doesn’t want them invading her workspace may not be the best example to follow.
3. Do they spend time learning from others? When people are full of themselves and think they can’t learn from anyone else, they have reached the point where they are no longer worth listening to. We can always learn from others.

There are also some key qualities to look for in a Christian guide or mentor. The first quality is humility. Humility is a virtue in the Christian faith, not in our world. A true mentor knows that he or she doesn’t already know it all. So instead of allowing you to study at their feet, they want to learn and study with you. During the Last Supper with His disciples, Jesus got up from the table and began to wash the disciples’ feet. When the disciples objected, Jesus said, “**You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.**” (John 13:7) A humble person realizes that true wisdom takes time, so they don’t give up on us. Jesus didn’t give up on the disciples and he doesn’t give up on us.

The second quality of a good Christian guide is they are honest. An honest mentor helps us take a good look at our lives. They help us to recognize and then to remove the distractions, the false ideas, the obstacles to our faith and faithfulness. They don’t just say nice things to us; they speak the truth in love. They correct us when we are wrong. The honest Christian guide also reveals the truth of God’s word and God’s love for us.

Finally, a good Christian mentor is honorable. If we become what we honor, we need to learn from and follow honorable people. Now that doesn’t mean that we have to look for a perfect “Yoda” to follow because there has only ever been one perfect person and his name is Jesus Christ. But we do need to look for people who honor the Lord. When they make mistakes, we need to be careful not to repeat them. When they set good examples for us to follow, we should learn from them and model their actions.

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who had a spiritual mentor, a hero of faith to follow. Joshua had Moses. Elisha had Elijah. Ruth had Naomi. Mary had Elizabeth. Timothy had Paul. John Mark had Peter. And of course the disciples had Jesus. Who is your spiritual mentor? While you're looking, remember that Jesus is better than any Yoda. He is humble, honest and honorable. And He is approachable. He wants to be your guide.

Join us next week as we conclude this series by asking "Who's your Zacchaeus? Did you know that you need a reject?"