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selfishness.

Tom Chapin

Learn to be a mentor to younger men by Tom Chapin

Have you looked down lately? I don't mean at your feet, at the ground, or down the slope of your nose. Have you, as a men's leader, looked at the next generation of young men who will soon replace you?

It's a loaded question that I hope you'll take serious because there is a big cultural gap that needs some bridging. There are many young guys out there today that are wondering, *"Who is paying attention to me?"*

Who is going to help the young guys transition into adulthood? The transition is not easy. Reflect back to your 20s. I'm sure it won't take long for you to remember the hurdles, the hills, and the hiccups you faced.

When you look at the men in the local church from 18 to 100 years old, you see an enormous gap, specifically with 18- to 25-year-olds. We have a generation of incredible young men who are facing some of the toughest transitions in life. Transitions into college, manhood, marriage, career, financial independence, and fatherhood.

Now 35, I look back at my wedding pictures in near shock at how young I was. At 23 years old, I stood before my bride-to-be, my family, friends, pastor, and God at the altar of commitment and covenant and repeated words

and concepts I had no clue if I could live up to. And I didn't. I failed miserably in marriage. I struggled insecurely through career opportunities. I flunked out of college over and over, and I had zero discipline when it came to handling my finances.

The big question is, "Could this have been avoided?" I say, "Absolutely, without a doubt." In bright red ink Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble." In other words, the troubles, the struggles, the pain, and the confusion were and are inevitable. But the outcomes of those troubled circumstances could have been very different if I had just one older man, with learned experience, make a small investment in my life and help guide me through the fog.

I believe you and I, as Kingdom leaders, have a responsibility to invest in the next generation. It would be selfish of us to focus our remaining years in leadership on ourselves. We can get so temped to chase a bigger platform, grow a bigger ministry, make a name for ourselves, impress the local church with our ideas or write a best-selling book. That's not service; that's selfishness.

"There is no greater legacy for a man to leave than wisdom," Howard Hendricks said.

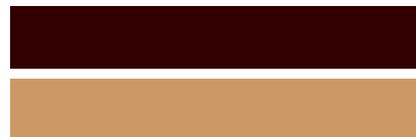
He quotes Solomon...

Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing
And benefits those who see the sun.
Wisdom is a shelter
As money is a shelter,
But the advantage of knowledge is this:
That wisdom preserves the life of its possessor. (Ecc. 7:11-12)

Hendricks goes on to say, "Wisdom lasts. That's why Solomon urged young men to 'get wisdom.' To deprive them of what you can offer is like dying without a will."

How many young guys will possess wisdom
because of you?

How many young lives will be preserved



because you cared enough to invest?

I know what many of you are thinking right now. You're concerned about not being able to relate. You fear getting rejected and if you're truly honest, you're a little intimidated because you don't understand their culture. The music, the tattoos, the dress, the nose rings, and the lingo are all a little much for you, the 'Boomer,' to understand. Am I right?

Here's the good news. Young guys are dying to have you take interest in their life. No joke. I don't care how many pairs of Dockers you own, the fact that you tuck your shirt in, wear loafers, or listen to country music. They still need to get wisdom from you! You and I come from a generation that taught us to be highly critical, and many of us are. They come from a generation that celebrates all things – even Dockers! They are after an experience; they want to express themselves for the unique creatures they are in life, faith, and relationships. My question to you is, "Will you help them? Will you invest?"

Let me give you some practical ideas for starting out:

1. Make an introduction and make yourself available. I find that lunch is a great time to connect since we all need to eat. Spend one lunch a week investing in a young man's life.

2. Ask significant spiritual questions and master the art of listening. Bob Biehl said, "Ask shallow questions, get shallow answers; ask profound questions, get profound answers; ask no questions, get no answers." Go after the deep stuff.

3. Take an interest in their culture. Their music, clothes, and conversations might seem weird to you, but it's not to them. It's as normal to them as 'parting your hair' is to you. Take an interest, I think you'll find it fascinating and engaging.

4. Make it a point to know their likes and dislikes. This is just good advice in any friendship or relationship.

5. Compliment their strengths. God had given them unique gifts, talents, and strengths, just like you. As you encourage and compliment what you see, you will achieve far more in their lives than you'll ever know. Your words will give them the confidence to take life's journey head on.

Has God gotten your attention through this article? I sure hope so. That's been my prayer. It's my hearts desire to celebrate the leadership of men in the local church as they look ahead by looking down. With this article comes awareness, responsibility, and not long from now, you'll have an opportunity to act. An opportunity is like a train pulling away from the station. If you fail to get on, you missed the opportunity to reach its destination. Nobody wins. Don't miss the train.

This is your opportunity, and I believe it could be your most powerful Kingdom investment ever. All aboard!