

"It's not what happens when you're here, it's what happens when you're not - that is the mark of a true leader."

I've taken that admonition to heart, whether it's at work - when bringing up new staff - or in my ministry. It's true on an organizational level, but also true for eternity. Gene Molway, a pastor and friend, a great leader of leaders, taught me that principle. He left us this week and is celebrating for eternity now.

My heart [aches](#) as I wrestle with the loss of a man who encouraged and challenged me, pushing me far beyond comfort. Is this how Timothy felt when Paul turned him loose to pastor a church and then went off to prison? I'm not ready yet! You can't leave.

But through Gene, God has prepared me, prepared many of us, to move forward - and we are not without his guiding words and examples. Here are just a few:

Servant leadership. There was nothing Gene wasn't willing to endure to create a place for ministry to happen - fatigue, heat, cold, sacrificing his own needs for someone on a team.

"Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us." 1 Thessalonians 2:8

Hold loosely. "Ministry isn't yours," he would remind us. It depends on God. And, if He is in the building of it, He can use others as easily as you. Build into others to continue the work. Pass it on. God deserves the glory.

"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." Philippians 4:9

Teach by example. A playful debate existed between Gene and me about the idea of rabbis. He was very uncomfortable with saying, like Paul, "be like me." And yet, his very way of teaching and being was a living example to imitate, as he pursued being like Christ.

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you." 1 Corinthians 11:1

Preach the Word. A puritan at heart, Gene valued the Bible and taught it wholeheartedly. Truth is truth - and he delivered it passionately with love. I will miss our discussions as we wrestled through God's Word.

"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Timothy 2:2

Love without reservation. We love God and each other better because of him. People across the globe are hurting at their loss because they KNEW that they were his favorite (how did he do that?). And they all were right! We all were his favorite! He and his loving family expand the definition of family as they include anyone in need of a place to belong.

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you." 1 Thessalonians 3:12

I have seen an example of living out Jesus with all your heart. Gene made me think sharper, respecting God's Word, and love grander, without reservation. When Elijah left Elisha he asked God for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. I've always thought Gene "Elijah-like" and so God, I'd love a double portion of his generous spirit.

What will happen, now that he's gone? We will see the true mark of a leader. Gene has sprinkled seeds of leadership all over the world. He has invested and toiled and cared. Because he held loosely, because it was never his in the first place, the people and ministries he has touched will continue to grow.

Gene, you gave us the tools. Your cheers and encouragement echo in our heart and mind. Because of your example of godliness and the work of the Spirit, I am confident that the work God gave you will continue through the people you touched.

Next won't be easy, especially at first. But he has taught us well. Though we have lost a great cheerleader, he has taught us to cheer one another other on. We will miss his hearty passion, but he has shown us the Source. He has finished his race, but has joined that great cloud of witnesses and I'm sure we'll hear him rooting us on.

"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Hebrews 13:7

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