

Spiritual Care



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Leader's Guide

How to use "Spiritual Care" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS is not another program. You don't have to build a program from scratch or take another night to be out. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS works when you want it to, where you want it to, the way you want it to. It's completely flexible and designed to be easy to use.

You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with board members or with other committees or groups of leaders. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS at the beginning of a board meeting or committee meeting:

1. Select a learning tool. In this theme of "Spiritual Care," you'll find multiple types of handouts from which to choose:

- ◆ an interview
- ◆ case studies
- ◆ how-to articles
- ◆ assessment tools
- ◆ devotionals

2. Select a handout. You could select one of the two assessments in this theme: "Healed Enough to Lead?" (p.5), or "How To Give Good Advice" (p. 6). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

3. Photocopy the handout. Let's say you selected "Healed Enough to Lead?" Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

4. Prepare for the discussion. We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

5. Lead the discussion. Most handouts can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes. Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

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The Business of Making Saints

What it means to give spiritual care.

Galatians 5:16-26; Acts 2:38-39

In this interview, Eugene Peterson, long-time pastor and professor of spirituality at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, and translator of The Message, gives help in how to shepherd a soul.

If I were to walk into a church, what would tip me off that it was concerned about “meeting needs” or about “shepherding souls”?

Eugene Peterson: Some of this you don't notice right away, but I would be wary of a church that was over-glamorous, that promised a lot.

I have no objection to finding all the ways you can to get a hearing. Sometimes that means helping people get their kid off drugs. So I'm not saying we shouldn't respond to people's needs, but the rock-bottom thing is “Repent and follow.”

If I revise “Repent” to “How I can help you get your life in order?” I'm turning away from the gospel. If I take the “Follow” part out and say, “We'll find out how you can live your life best the way you define it,” who needs Jesus?

So people come for blessing and sometimes the most pastoral thing you can do is offer correction.

I would call this “spiritual formation.” You're forming character. You're showing people how to practice certain things so they become embedded in their living, but those things are quite different from what they came to you for. Most people come to church with wrong expectations, they usually don't think about repentance, about *not* doing something that has become habitual to them, and following Jesus instead of their egos.

I teach them, “Jesus is a real person, and you need to follow him.” Basically you're teaching people how to pray.

How do you do that?

The first thing I say is, “Meet me Sunday morning at eleven o'clock.” I want to get past the idea that prayer is a do-it-yourself activity. I'm trying to give some sense of the largeness of prayer, the church at prayer.

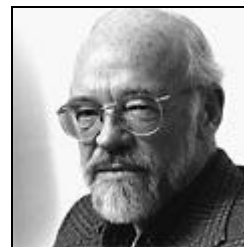
Then I get to know what kind of life they live. Do they wake up in the morning alive, or does it take ten o'clock and three cups of coffee for them to wake up? If they're that kind of a person, I don't suggest a morning quiet time.

I encourage them to memorize prayers so when they don't feel like praying, there are prayers to pray.

Somehow, I want to find out how people can disengage from their culture so there is some silence and solitude. I'm willing to work with people to find out how to do that, but this is slow work. Most pastoral work is slow work. It is not a program that you put in place and then have it happen. It's a life. It's a life of prayer.

What does it mean to shepherd another person's soul?

I begin with the conviction that everything in the gospel is experience-able. Whatever the person's situation, you're saying to yourself, *This person can experience the gospel here. I haven't a clue how it's going to happen, but I'm willing to slog through whatever has to be slogged through and not give up. I will continue to keep the gospel clear on Sundays, I will continue to be a companion with this person on Fridays.* ➤



EUGENE PETERSON

*“Our primary work
isto make
saints. We're in the
saint-making
business.”*



The Business of Making Saints *continued*

What should church leaders promise people that the gospel can deliver?

I'm not sure we are in the business of promising anything. That's not what we were called to do. We're called to be witnesses, to call people to discipleship, to engage in the formation of a spiritual life in Christian character.

There is an element of promise in the nature of the gospel, but it's usually so different from what people expect that they don't see it as a promise.

Suppose a parishioner comes to you deeply troubled about her marriage. What is your role?

Nobody just shows up to ask about her marriage. She's already part of a congregation. I'm not starting from ground zero. I'm starting from a commitment, membership in a body of Christ.

But always, I'm trying to pull people back into the worshiping community. I want to tell people, "This problem is not the whole world. It feels like the whole world, but it's not. You've got a golden opportunity every Sunday morning to reorient yourself."

Our primary work is to make saints. We're in the saint-making business. If we enter the human-potential business, we've lost our calling.

To Discuss

1. What does our church really communicate to people: "Repent and follow Jesus" or "The gospel will give you a better life"? How does that get communicated?
2. What systems do we have in place to encourage spiritual development in our people?
3. What is the goal of shepherding a soul? What does our church want to happen as a result of spiritual care?



Healed Enough to Lead?

Measuring readiness for church leadership.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 1 Timothy 3

A man who joined our fellowship came out of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Three months after his conversion, his daughter died. Then the woman he had been dating broke off their relationship. Then his business collapsed. It's now half of what it used to be.

Today, this man comes to three weekend services. He can't seem to get enough of God. He's not ready for significant leadership right now, but he's on the way toward the healing that could one day make him a powerful servant leader.

When will that be?

I don't know for sure. The goal is not to get him well enough so he can get on with the real business of the church. He is the real business of the church. But as his brokenness heals, his potential for leadership rises. Knowing when a broken person is ready to lead can be difficult to determine. Here are five tests to measure whether someone is ready:

- 1. Are they honest with themselves?** It's important that broken people can recognize they're broken. This is the first step toward healing, and, subsequently, leadership.
- 2. Are they in community?** Community is essential to biblical leadership. If a person can't build deep friendships that include accountability, that person is not ready to lead in the church.
- 3. Will they labor in obscurity?** A person isn't ready to lead until he or she is ready to disappear, to accept an obscure position and find fulfillment in that unseen role.
- 4. Are they flexible?** It's critical that a potential leader be gentle and patient with those he or she serves.
- 5. Are they faithful in little?** Jesus said, "If you've been faithful in little, then you will be made master of much." Readiness to lead is a process. It begins months and years earlier when people are asked to do something as simple as pass out bulletins. Once they're found faithful doing that, we move them to something more demanding.

—DANIEL BROWN WITH ROBERT MOELLER

To Discuss

1. Do we have a system for evaluating potential leaders? What is it?
2. Who is ultimately responsible for determining candidates for leadership positions in our church? How are candidates chosen?
3. What is our church attitude toward people in crisis? Toward broken people?



How to Give Good Advice

4 ingredients for good decisions.

Proverbs 27:6; 19:20

Great advice-givers have some common qualities:

1. The right motive. More bad advice emerges from bad motives than from bad judgment. Often I see advice given that comes from a motive of keeping another person dependent. To me, it's dishonest to create a dependent relationship out of an opportunity to help.

I've also known people whose major concern was protecting their reputation, so they give ambivalent messages. Other people are advicaholics, compelled to give advice, to demonstrate their knowledge. Generally they're not satisfied with themselves, so they dish out directions to others.

The right motive: simply a desire to help others—giving help that truly is help.

2. The required facts. Since the facts are so essential to good advice, I not only ask for them but test them. I've learned that the facts are not always apparent. Often they're colored by anxiety and supposition.

Often I'll ask a person to repeat certain parts of the story to see if the details and emotions come out the same.

I'll also try to determine the elements on which others depend. For instance, people often ask if they should quit their jobs. My first question is, "Do you have another to go to?"

3. Healthy intuition. Intuition is the ability to imagine the possible scenarios and see the one that is the most practical, the most attractive, the most profitable. Imagination enters because there may be several scenarios to choose from, and it's important to see them all to find the one that fits a little better.

Scenarios and intuition, of course, can be subjective and inaccurate. Because of my ancestor Adam, I've inherited a fallen human nature that is unable to be totally honest, but because of Christ's influence in my life, I'm able not to be dishonest with myself. If we examine ourselves carefully, we can usually recognize the prejudices and preferences that might throw off our intuition.

4. Experience. Experience tempers our intuition and helps apply it. Experience helps us:

- ◆ know how much people can accomplish.
- ◆ work with emotions. There are times when advice can be straightforward and other times when it needs to be indirect.
- ◆ know when not to give advice. I often use the phrase, "I'm really not the person you ought to ask."

—FRED SMITH

To Discuss

1. How does our church harness the wisdom of its senior saints? What programs connect the older with the younger?
2. One temptation in giving advice is to give it before all the facts are known. What are the qualities of a good listener?
3. How could someone create a dependent relationship when giving advice? What is the purpose of advice?



Caution for Caregivers

Help for protecting the church and the wounded.

1 Timothy 5:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

The Case Karen spoke enthusiastically as she prepared to exit after a worship service. “Can we get together? I *really* need to talk to you about my struggle with fear. May I stop by sometime this week?”

“Why don't you call on Tuesday,” I replied, “and we'll see about setting up a meeting.” Out of a corner of my eye, I noticed a look of disapproval from my wife.

Later at home, my wife said, “I really don't think you should meet with Karen. I think she wants attention.... your attention. I would feel more comfortable if a woman from the church met with her.”

What Would You Do?

- ♦ What factors make people in need vulnerable to sexual temptation in counseling situations?
- ♦ If you are a male leader, would you meet with Karen? If so, what kind of precautions would you take?
- ♦ If you are a female leader, how would the dynamics change if the situation were reversed?

What Happened

When Karen called, I agreed to meet with her in my office. I explained I would meet with her once to assess her spiritual needs. Then I would find another woman in our congregation who could provide on-going spiritual care. I explained this was standard procedure.

I also took some precautions: I made the appointment at a time when my secretary and others would be present. Then, I informed both my wife and my secretary about the appointment. During the meeting, I left my office door open.

Eventually Karen began meeting regularly with a woman in our congregation.

—STEVEN D. MATHEWSON

To Discuss

1. Is the writer in this story too paranoid about what might happen? Should church leaders never counsel members of the opposite sex?
2. How does a leader communicate church policies to care-seeking members of the opposite sex without giving the impression that “I have a hang-up” or “You have a hang-up”?
3. What kind of policies can protect both leaders and seekers of spiritual care from emotional and/or sexual involvement?



Distributing the Load

The pastor isn't the only one called to help the hurting.

Galatians 6:4; 1 Peter 2:9

The Case Pastor Rick sighed before venting his frustrations to the church board: “I feel like all I do is put out fires. Don't get me wrong—I want to help people when they come with their problems. But it seems like I never have time to work with the healthy people, the ones who have potential to make a difference. I spend all my time responding to the people with problems. We really don't have the resources or the personnel to help these people so that I can concentrate on being the pastor God called me to be. I'm asking you for some help.”

What Would You Do?

- ◆ As a member of the church board, what observations would you share with Pastor Rick?
- ◆ What steps would you take to help him focus on his other pastoral responsibilities?
- ◆ How would you address the spiritual care void that might be created if the pastor refocuses his priorities?

What Happened The board chair began asking Pastor Rick how he spent his time. Before long, the board agreed that Pastor Rick's concerns were legitimate, and they began to explore solutions. Someone suggested the board should help him identify potential leaders in whom he could invest.

“Be proactive about meeting with these potential leaders,” the board chair suggested. “That way, you can control your schedule. People who come for spiritual care will have to work around your schedule instead of your working around theirs.”

Another suggested the board members themselves should take a more active role. A couple admitted their reluctance due to a lack of training and confidence. They said that some training sessions might make them more comfortable.

The board also decided to challenge the church's small group leaders to assume a more intentional role in spiritual care.

—STEVEN D. MATHEWSON

To Discuss

1. “The pastor doesn't visit enough” is a common complaint. Does the majority of our church expect to be visited periodically by the pastor? What are our expectations of the pastor? Are they biblical?
2. What resources does our church have for providing care for hurting people?
3. How can our church identify and train selected people to meet specialized needs?
4. How can we mobilize our small groups or other ministries to provide spiritual care?



Caring Enough to Confront

Discipline and rebuke are as necessary as nourishment and nurture.

John 15:2; 2 Timothy 4:2

Read *He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful (John 15:2). correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction (2 Tim. 4:2b).*

Comprehend Gardeners, if they're good at what they do, have two choices: to cut off or to cut back. Neither option sounds like fun if you're the plant, of course. The thought of being cut short suggests something painful or, at the very least, something uncomfortable. From the plant's perspective, cutting is a negative concept. It's going backward. The Gardener has a different view. When we, the "plants," begin to see as God sees, we discover the painful, cutting times often yield vigorous spiritual growth. We go forward by going backward. Positive results can come from experiences that seem negative.

If that is true for us, that is also true for those we serve. Yet leaders often shy away from the task of pruning.

Pruning is an essential part of good spiritual care. Cutting isn't unkind when it's necessary. A loving confrontation, a firm denial, a direct rebuke—these are pruning tools to produce more and better fruit in the lives of followers of Christ.

Leaders may prefer to avoid awkward, uncomfortable conversations. But without careful trimming, what can happen? Productivity may slacken. The church may become careless. Sidestep the pain of confrontation, and energies are expended elsewhere, usually in maintaining unnecessary foliage—outdated programs, meaningless activities, inappropriate expectations—in an attempt to keep people happy.

Spiritual care does not mean coddling people's feelings or perpetuating their pet projects. An appropriately measured rebuke or an aptly timed correction can redirect the focus of the church back to its mission—producing fruit.

If we really care for those we serve, we'll prune them in a loving and careful manner. No matter how much they complain. Or how uncomfortable we feel.

—RICHARD DOEBLER

Discuss

1. Why is it so difficult for Christian leaders to confront followers in a healthy way?
2. How can we create a church culture that encourages loving confrontation?
3. How does our culture's value of tolerance complicate the idea of necessary confrontation?



Serving with a Whole Heart

Effective soul care comes from an authentic soul.

Psalm 78:70-72

Read *He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them (Psalm 78:70-72).*

Comprehend Shepherding is not a vocation you stumble upon. You don't just wake up one morning and say, "I'm getting tired of what I am doing. I need something with a bit more excitement. I think I'll become a shepherd."

No, there's an intensely personal process by which one becomes a shepherd, one who can effectively care for God's flock. To be authentic in nurturing and sustaining the souls of others, we can't sidestep the work God desires to do first in ours. David's life demonstrates four aspects of God's inner work:

1. Call. Before a person can choose a work, God must choose the worker. "He chose David his servant...." If raw enthusiasm or infatuation for adventure entices us to jump ahead of God's call, we invite trouble. Better to be cautious and assume nothing. But if God gives abilities and issues a call, then respond quickly.

2. Contentment. David learned the basics of leadership in "the sheep pens." He practiced on sheep before he was promoted to take care of people.

If I'm content to start modestly and if I am faithful, God will bring me in time to the next level of responsibility. My part is to serve where he puts me—and not rush the process.

3. Character. David led and cared for others with integrity of heart.

In light of David's many moral failings, how can we talk about his integrity? Probably because integrity does not mean "perfect." It means "whole," coming from the same root as the word *integer*. *Integrity* means we're not fragmented; we're not divided—saying one thing and living another. David confessed when confronted with his wrongs. People can't expect perfect leaders, but they deserve shepherds with integrity.

4. Craft. Beyond the innate gift for leadership that God plants within a person, leadership skills can be learned. We can become more effective as leaders. We can sharpen our methods. David led the people "with skillful hands." Leaders must "keep watch over you as men who must give an account" (Heb. 13:17). That high standard of accountability should stir us to invest in training for leadership.

—RICHARD DOEBLER

- Discuss**
1. What are the marks of an authentic leader? Is leadership more a matter of the head or the heart?
 2. How can the flaws of a church leader jeopardize his or her integrity?
 3. Why is accountability essential for developing leaders of high caliber?



Caring for a Difficult Person

Some personalities require extra attention.

1 John 4:7-8; Colossians 3:12-14

A passive-aggressive person appears friendly and is eager to get involved in the church—until you entrust him or her with an important task. Then, to your surprise and confusion, this person often drops the ball. This type of personality submerges negative feelings and resists open, healthy discussion of problems.

Instead, this hidden hostility takes the form of procrastination, lack of cooperation, and behind-the-scenes manipulation of others. How does a church leader handle such a frustrating personality?

- 1. Confront.** Assertive confrontation lessens your vulnerability to passive-aggressive people and reduces your frustration. Set up a meeting, and prepare to be persistent when he is late or misses the appointment altogether.
- 2. Identify the pattern.** When you do get together, identify what you perceive happens in your interactions with him, and then invite the person to share his perception of those events. Be specific; give illustrations.
- 3. Own your feelings.** You might say, “Last spring I asked you to organize some summer events you had expressed interest in. The events never happened. When all was said and done, I was disappointed and angry.”
- 4. Break out of the pattern.** Make clear you prefer to avoid perpetuating a pattern of relating that leaves you both guilty and frustrated. If he wants to commit to a future ministry activity, ask him to arrange an accountability system that will enhance the likelihood of his success, such as a series of deadlines.
- 5. Make him responsible for his future choices.** Invite him to express his anger or fear more openly. Listen, but say, “I know for me it's more comfortable when I'm direct with my feelings—well, like I'm doing now with you. Otherwise I'd struggle with my anger and end up feeling guilty or just avoiding our relationship. Think about what I've said and let me know what you think.”

Follow up your confrontation with some distinct boundary identifications depending on the response (or more likely, the non-response) you receive.

—LOUIS MCBURNEY

To Discuss

1. Think about some recent conflict in your extended family or work place. Has that conflict centered on one person? Does that person exhibit any of the passive-aggressive characteristics?
2. How comfortable are we with confrontation? Describe a recent example in our church of a loving confrontation.
3. Where is the line between compassion for one who struggles emotionally but causes disruption in the body of Christ and the need to make sure the mission of the church doesn't get sidetracked?



Chronically Wounded and Needy

Loving those who may never get better.

James 1:17; 3:9-12

Most every church has at least one CWN parishioner. CWN stands for “chronically wounded and needy.”

Every CWN is, first, deeply wounded. Often traumatized by abuse, abandonment, or family dysfunction, CWNs limp through life. Their wounds are real, though they develop self-defeating methods to seek healing.

Second, CWN parishioners exude neediness, so they hang around church. They cling. If ignored, they may pout or perhaps create a new crisis—anything to get the focus back on their needs. Third, this is usually a chronic condition. There is no quick fix.

How can we minister to these folks without feeling chronically tired and used up?

1. Practice Christ-like acceptance. Healthier church members often gossip or gripe about CWNs. But I can't imagine Jesus gossiping about those chronically wounded lepers or griping about that incredibly needy Gerasene demoniac. Christ accepted them. Every CWN is bearing a painful soul wound.

2. Communicate clear boundaries. Working with people has led me to three principles regarding boundary-setting:

- ◆ I must take the initiative. If I don't, a CWN person will innocently assume I'm always available.
- ◆ Boundaries must be specific, clearly defining when and where I will be available.
- ◆ I must gently verbalize boundaries and then lovingly stand my ground. That way I encourage CWNs to stand up straight and receive the healing that only Christ can give.

3. Pursue servanthood, not “success.” Ministering to CWNs involves an openness to failure. I may take all the right steps and still see no fruit. Servanthood, not success, is my calling.

4. Encourage spiritual growth. I like to support small steps of spiritual growth by asking two simple questions:

- ◆ What goals would you like to set?
- ◆ What gifts would you like to share? I assume that eventually even the deeply wounded can share gifts with the congregation.

5. Connect with other resources. I can't do everything for a CWN person. This simple fact forces me to collaborate with other resources.

6. Keep bringing them to Jesus. Healing prayer (or “bringing people to Jesus”) is not a quick fix. It doesn't bypass the process of slow, steady growth or remove the need for acceptance, encouragement, boundaries, etc. Sometimes healing prayer simply reorients the wounded and needy to the proper source of healing—Christ. Then, like David, they can become the continually transformed and hopeful.

—MATHEW WOODLEY

To Discuss

1. Describe “chronically wounded and needy” people you've known at work or in other settings.
2. What does it mean to set boundaries with someone?
3. What other resources could we tap to help the chronically wounded and needy in our congregation?



4 Steps to Responsibility

Helping the hurting to help others.

1 Peter 5:2-5; Lamentations 3:22-33

A woman whose husband left her recently began attending our church. Shattered, she is casting about for emotional moorings to help her regain equilibrium. With a ministry background, she knows how to minister to people; she just doesn't know how to do so in the midst of her pain and confusion.

Every follower of Christ is in the continual process of restoration; everyone is messed up and in need of God's healing. But at certain stages of our brokenness, we're not able to serve others. How can I help this woman back into leadership? I see the process in four stages:

- 1. Love, without much advice.** Personal disasters usually bring a person to the point of asking, "Does anyone care about me?" So, I begin by saying, "I care about you, and so does God."
- 2. Invite people to "little involvements."** These don't call for much emotional fortitude and don't put people on the line. If people can't finish the job, it won't be a disaster. The service may be as simple as cutting out paper figures for our children's program, or joining a crew to cut up a tree that fell during a windstorm.
- 3. Help people understand their deep hurt about what happened to them.** If they're highly sensitive, I can't say, "Hey, get over this. It was no big deal." What registers as 2.0 on someone's emotional Richter scale may be a 9.0 for sensitive souls. I try to help them accept that there's nothing wrong with feeling deeply—actually, that is how God created them.
- 4. Welcome people back to significant service—with permission to carry their bruises.** Spiritually speaking, I like to see if I can get a person with a broken arm to work with someone with a broken leg.

—DANIEL BROWN WITH BOB MOELLER

To Discuss

1. Do you agree with the statement "every follower of Christ is in the continual process of restoration"? Why or why not?
2. When did a Christian help you during a difficult time? What did you find helpful?
3. How can we hold one another accountable yet create an environment that allows the hurting to return to service?



How to Be a Mentor

4 ways to make a difference in someone's life.

Romans 15:1-2; 1 Timothy 6:20-21

A mentoring relationship is primarily a friendship. Here are several things to help us develop meaningful relationships with those we mentor:

- 1. Create encounters.** We can't mentor unless we have contact with people. Church retreats may open the door for meeting people. We can watch especially for those who make the effort to come talk to us as a result of those encounters.
- 2. Fade into the relationship.** Naturally, we can't just announce to a likely candidate, "I'm your mentor. I'm going to shape your life." Instead, we have to send signals that let a person know his or her life will be safe with us molding it, because in the end, it's the other person who has to trust us to be a mentor.
- 3. Offer regular check-ins.** Mentoring is rarely an intense, organized relationship. We won't necessarily have a list of people we contact each week. It's more of a natural interaction with people when we happen to see them. Still, we have to make the effort to stay in touch; we want to give people opportunities to check in, to tell us how they're doing and what they're thinking about.
Sometimes it is beneficial to organize opportunities for people to check in.
- 4. Fade out of the relationship.** Mentoring is not like a therapeutic relationship: It's not seven weeks of sessions, which are then terminated. Mentoring is more like an ongoing, highly flexible relationship in which we check in with another human being, possibly for the rest of life.
There are different levels of involvement, however, and over time, intense mentoring will give way to less-regular, more-infrequent meetings. For example, if I have a good mentoring relationship, even if I haven't seen the person for months, we can check in with each other in a matter of minutes. I find out quickly what the person is thinking, where he is growing, where he is hurting.

—EARL F. PALMER

To Discuss

1. What kinds of church programs encourage relationships between the young and the older to develop?
2. Which of you have either been mentored by someone or mentored someone? What were the benefits you experienced from the relationship?
3. How does our spiritual development make progress in a mentoring relationship?