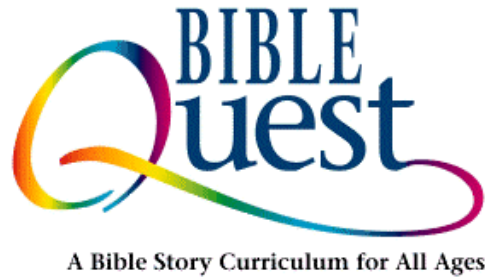


Workshop



Spiritual Formation for Leaders

Enter into Planning

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-9a. Call to mind someone who has nourished you in your faith journey. Who first took you to church? Who has stayed by you in times of doubt and questioning? When we take time to remember our relationships with those who nurtured our faith—our spiritual elders and/or spiritual friends—we catch a glimpse of how to connect in relationship with a learner in order to nurture spiritual growth and faith. When we remember the characteristics of those who nurture our faith, we begin to intentionally cultivate those elements in ourselves as we relate to the learners we encounter.

Read the article “Spiritual Formation for Leaders.” What new idea did you gain from this article? As you read, what people in your congregation come to mind, both leaders and learners?

Review the plan for the workshop. The workshop is designed for a one-hour period. If you will have more or less time, which activities will you include, and which will you leave out?

Think about the people who will be attending this workshop. Name each one aloud. Write each name on an index card. Create some cards for people whom you do not yet know. Each day before the workshop pray for these persons by name. After the workshop write a comment about each person on his or her card that will remind you of that person’s role as a spiritual leader.

Pray for wisdom as you lead the workshop and for a deepening of your spiritual life.

You Will Need

- name tags
- Bibles
- marker crayons, and/or paints
- paper
- masking tape
- newsprint
- *Bible Quest* age-level Leader’s Guides
- hymnbook
- stickers

Prepare



Greet and gather

Name tags, newsprint, markers, Bibles

Arrange the room in a way that speaks of welcome. What will be a comfortable seating arrangement that supports the content of the workshop? Provide an area for the guided meditation, as well as tables for working.

Name tags are important if there is just one person who does not know someone else in the group. After everyone has arrived, have each person introduce himself or herself and name one hope for this workshop. List these hopes on newsprint and use them at the end of the workshop to determine if you have met the expressed needs of the group members.

Distribute Bibles and invite everyone to find 2 Timothy 1:1-9a. Some in the group may need guidance in locating this text. Remind them that 2 Timothy is in the New Testament near the back. It is found after Colossians and before Hebrews. Ask a volunteer to read the text or read it yourself.

Say a prayer thanking God for those who are in the workshop and asking for God's presence among you in this time.



Lead a guided meditation

Tell the group that you are going to lead them through a guided meditation. Invite them to get in a comfortable position. If possible, dim the lighting in the room. Have the participants close their eyes. Pause for a moment and then begin reading the following:

Breathe slowly and gently in, out; in, out (repeat five times). Allow the chair to hold your weight as you sink into it. Continue to breathe gently. Now choose a time in your life when you were with a person who nurtured your faith (a spiritual elder or spiritual friend). Picture yourself with this person. Where are you? What are you saying? (pause) What is your spiritual mentor saying? (pause) What are you feeling? (pause) Stay in the moment and experience this time of faith nurture and support. Now begin to say good-bye to your spiritual mentor. Thank him or her for caring for your journey with Jesus Christ. Say good-bye. Thank God for your spiritual mentor. Slowly and gently open your eyes and look around with a soft gaze. Relax and breathe normally.

Sit in silence for a moment. Then invite those who are willing to talk about this experience. Who was in their vision? Where were they? What insights did they gain from this meditation?

Tell



Define spirituality

Newsprint, markers

Many top-selling books are about spirituality. Everyone seems to talk about it, and some have a good idea of what it means to them. The word spirituality is used frequently, yet the meaning is often unclear. Invite the participants to define what spirituality means to them. List their ideas on newsprint. You may have two columns, one for what spirituality is, and one for what it is not.

One person has said that spirituality refers to the way(s) in which we establish a living relationship with God. It involves the attitudes we have, the disciplines we use to know or experience the presence of God in our lives, and a constant exploration of both the attitudes and the disciplines. Another person claims that Christian spirituality involves transforming responsiveness of the whole person individually and corporately to God and participation in God's continuing creation and redemption in and through Jesus Christ. How do these definitions fit with your group's understanding?



Find spiritual guidance in the Leader's Guides

Bible Quest age-level Leader's Guides

Distribute the Leader's Guides. It does not matter if each person has the age-level guide he or she will be using as a leader.

Have them turn to the first page of any session (8, 14, 20, and so on.) Point out "Enter the Story." This section aims to help the leaders spiritually prepare to lead the session. Each week they are invited to encounter the Bible story directly by reading, contemplating, and praying. This section will offer suggestions and questions to help the leaders connect with the story emotionally and spiritually, as well as intellectually, and will invite them to begin to explore its meaning and significance in their lives. Leaders are invited to ask their own questions of the story: Where am I in this story? How does this story speak to me?

Invite the participants to compare these sections across age levels. Look together at one of the bookmark stories for the quarter (noted in the table of contents).

Connect



Make a mural

Paper; markers, crayons, or paint, masking tape; index cards

Ask the participants to use the markers, crayons, or paints to draw a picture of their relationship with their spiritual mentor. They may illustrate their vision from the guided meditation or picture that person demonstrating some helpful element of nurturing, such as reading the Bible or a formative book, hugging to show warmth or caring for someone's need. Those who are uncomfortable with their artistic

skills may use words, phrases, musical notes, or symbols drawn in colors to help tell the story of their relationship.

When everyone is finished, invite them to tape their pictures to the wall to make a mural or collage. When all the pictures are posted and everyone has shared, make a list of the elements that seem to be most helpful in being a spiritual mentor of faith and a reflection of the life lived with Christ, self and others. Write each element on an index card and post the cards around the pictures.

Invite each participant to reflect silently on two elements they most want God's assistance in developing for an effective relationship. Ask those who are willing to name these for the group in a mode of responsive prayer. As each person names an element, the group will respond, "God hear our prayer." When all have shared, close the prayer with "Amen."



Design a plan for spiritual nurture

Copies of the article "Spiritual Formation of Leaders," newsprint, markers, stickers

Distribute copies of the article and point out that the author explores five questions related to the spiritual formation of leaders. Divide the group into pairs or threes and assign one question to each group. Their task is to read the question and identify at least three ways that spiritual growth of leaders is addressed. Have them list these ways on newsprint.

Bring the group together and hear reports from each small group. Post all the newsprint sheets in a visible area.

What additional suggestions do group members have for how they as leaders can be strengthened in their spiritual journey?

As leaders who have accepted the call to be responsible for groups in the church school, which of these ways to nurture spiritual growth would be most helpful to them? Give each person five stickers or a marker. These are their votes. They may place their votes on any of the ideas listed on the newsprint. They may use all votes for one idea or spread their votes among several ideas.

When all the votes have been cast, look at the list and see what has been identified as most helpful. Assure the participants that you will give this list to the Christian education committee or the committee that recruited them to be leaders.

What one discipline is each person willing to commit to that will nurture him or her as a leader of an age-level group?

Celebrate



Sing a song

Hymnbook

Invite the group to join you in singing “Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Me” or another hymn from your hymnbook that speaks of God’s presence in your life.



Identify insights

Invite the participants to share insights they have gained about the spiritual formation of leaders. What reassurance have they gained from knowing the congregation is interested in their spiritual growth?

Close with a prayer naming each participant and thanking God for being present among the group.

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