

FIVE KEY AREAS

by Dr. Keith Farmer

The role of the Christian leader, particularly the role of leading a local church, is one of the most diverse and difficult vocations in our society. The pressures and stresses of Christian leadership have led many to abandon ministry, and in some cases to abandon church and faith altogether.

My personal experience as a leader and mentor has led me to conclude that although the skills of ministry leadership are important, character issues are even more important. Effective 'doing' comes out of effective 'being'. What we do is based on who we are. Effective transformational leadership over an extended period of time depends deeply on the Christian character of the leader. If character unravels under pressure, then ministry leadership is severely and adversely affected.

Mentoring is therefore an ongoing relationship of choice on the part of both the mentor and the mentoree. It is the equivalent of the GP medical checkup that is designed to monitor the vital signs for ongoing health. It monitors 5 key areas of the leader's wellbeing: **Spirituality, the health of key relationships, emotional health, general lifestyle health and vulnerabilities.**

The key qualifications required for a mentor of Christian leaders is that the person has had significant experience as a Christian leader themselves (probably at least 10 years and preferably longer), and that they are still in good shape i.e. they still love God, their family, the Church and people in general.

Christian leadership is such a personal and multi skilled vocation that I would suggest the Mentoree also has a Coach (for what they do), and that they are strongly embedded in a 'Ministry Leaders Support Group' where honesty is fostered by each confessing – "I am a pastor" etc.

My experience tells me that Mentoring is best seen as having a "Relational" emphasis where the mentoree is asked – "How are you going?" – and he or she is able to talk about whatever is on their heart and mind. It then gradually evolves into the Mentor checking, through pertinent questions, each of the 5 key areas mentioned above.

The regularity, length, mode and place of mentoring have many options! I find 4 or 5 contacts per year each of 2 hours for an individual and 3 hours for a couple works well for most leaders.

Mentoring overlaps with, but is not synonymous with pastoral care, counselling, coaching, and supervision. I believe at its heart mentoring is basically about discipling and is vital for Christian faith as well as leadership.