

Shepherding Others



Contents	PAGE
Leader's Guide	2
Bible Study: THE POWER OF CARING FOR PEOPLE <i>by Robb Redman</i>	3
Interview: WHERE HEALING BELONGS <i>interview with Larry Crabb</i>	4-5
Assessments: WHY NONPROFESSIONALS MAKE GREAT COUNSELORS <i>by Robert J. Morgan</i>	6
STAYING CLOSE TO YOUR "ENEMIES" <i>by Gary D. Preston</i>	7
THE CARE AND FEEDING OF LEADERS <i>by Roy C. Price</i>	8
Case Study: COMFORT IN THE FACE OF TRAGEDY <i>by Karen Mohler</i>	9
Devotional: MINISTERS OF HEALING <i>by Bruce Larson</i>	10
How To Articles: HOW TO GIVE GOOD ADVICE <i>by Fred Smith</i>	11
RAISING UP SHEPHERDING GROUPS <i>by Charles Ver Straten</i>	12
SHEPHERDING IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH <i>by Greg Asimakoupoulos</i>	13
Activity EXERCISES IN CARING <i>by Eric Reed</i>	14
Resources FURTHER EXPLORATION	15
Sample Retreat	16



Leader's Guide

How to use "Shepherding Others" by SMALLGROUPS.COM in your regularly scheduled meetings.

Welcome to SMALLGROUPS.COM. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you train and direct the leaders of your small-groups ministry. Selected by the editors of Ministry Resources at Christianity Today International, the material in this download comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

SMALLGROUPS.COM Training Themes are not just another program. Each theme contains materials on the topic you choose—no tedious program to follow. The materials work when you want, where you want, and the way you want them to. They're completely flexible and easy to use.

You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with small-group directors, coaches, and leaders. SMALLGROUPS.COM Training Themes fit easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use our material during your training meetings:

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

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible study | <input type="checkbox"/> case study | <input type="checkbox"/> activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> interview | <input type="checkbox"/> devotionals | <input type="checkbox"/> resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> assessment tools | <input type="checkbox"/> how-to articles | <input type="checkbox"/> sample retreat |

2. Select a handout. Suppose, for example, you have decided that your board or team needs to assess its understanding of church membership. There are three how-to articles in this theme: "How to Give Good Advice" (p. 12), "Raising Up Shepherding Groups" (p.13), and "Shepherding in the Shadow of Death" (p. 14). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

3. Photocopy the handout. Let's say you selected "Shepherding in the Shadow of Death." Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from SMALLGROUPS.COM (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 SMALLGROUPS.COM handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes (except the Bible study, which may take longer). 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 Smallgroups.com.

To contact the editors:

- E-mail SmallGroups@christianitytoday.com
 Mail SMALLGROUPS.COM, Christianity Today International
 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188





The Power of Caring for People

*The New Testament's wisdom on how to help others—
in body, soul, and spirit.*

1 Peter 5:1-4; Ephesians 4:11-16

Focus on its EXAMPLE

Pastoral care in the New Testament means building up the church as the body of Christ and the people of God. This care has its roots in the ministry of Jesus.

Discover: Read John 8:1-11; John 3:1-21.

Discuss: How did Jesus help people or care for them? How can churches today follow his example?

Focus on its FORM

Pastoral care in the early church took its form from the Jewish synagogue, out of which the first Christians had their religious formation. The position of elder, pastor, or bishop is thus parallel to the synagogue's ruling elders. Elders were primarily responsible for the spiritual needs of Christians; deacons served in areas of practical ministry.

Discover: Read Acts 6:1-7.

Discuss: What problem caused the early Christians to select Stephen and six other deacons? Who in our church is primarily responsible for helping people with spiritual needs? Who is primarily responsible for helping people with practical needs?

Focus on its AIM

The transformation of the whole person into the image of Christ is the basic aim of pastoral care in the early church. The message of salvation is a proclamation of whole-person healing as well as spiritual deliverance. Repentance (*metanoia*) indicates a fundamental orientation to Christ as the result of a personal encounter with him. Growth in Christ (*teleis*), on the other hand, is the outworking of that orientation under the guidance of the Spirit, in the context of the Christian fellowship. The apostles' ministry was aimed at guiding and directing persons, through conversion, into spiritual maturity in the Christian community.

Discover: Read Acts 2:41-47; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Discuss: How did the early Christians encourage repentance in people? Encourage spiritual growth? How is our approach similar to, or different from, theirs?

Focus on its MODES

The primary modes of pastoral care in the New Testament consist of mutual edification (*oikodome*), encouragement (*paraklesis*), and a mutual discipline. The work of pastoral care is here recognized as the work of the whole people of God.

On the other hand, the New Testament also recognizes the unique calling of pastors, elders, and bishops, who are given a ministry of oversight and supervision. Shepherding is the primary metaphor for this kind of pastoral care. Along with giving spiritual direction, the shepherd engages in a wide range of functions, from leading worship and teaching to providing food and caring for widows and orphans.

Discover: Read Ephesians 4:11-16.

Discuss: Why did God give "apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers" to the church? How do we help "the whole people of God" to do the work of ministry? Based on this Bible study, what is one thing God may be saying to our church?

—ROBB REDMAN. Adapted from *Leadership Handbook of Outreach and Care*. Used by permission of Baker Books, a division of Baker Book House Company, copyright © 1994. All rights to this material are reserved. Materials are not to be distributed to other web locations for retrieval, published in other media, or mirrored at other sites without written permission from Baker Book House Company.

<http://www.bakerbooks.com>.



Where Healing Belongs

Returning soul care to the local church.

Galatians 6:1-5; Romans 15:13-14

Several years ago, Christian psychologist and best-selling author Larry Crabb announced, “The primary context for healing should be the Christian community, not the antiseptic world of a private-practice therapist.” In this interview, Crabb talks about the practical implications of “eldering”—a term he coined to describe what ought to happen in the local church.

SMALLGROUPS.COM asked Crabb (author of Inside Out and of The Safest Place on Earth) how older, wiser church members can shepherd others.

You’ve called for new ways that the church can help people change. What’s wrong with the current approach?

Much of the church for too long has had a limited approach to helping people change. I would simply describe it, “Do what’s right.”

The counseling community then came along and said, “No, there’s something beneath people’s outward problems that’s all messed up.” They came up with a model I’d call, “Fix what’s wrong.”

My understanding is that beneath all the damage, because of the New Covenant, there is something good that God has placed within us—his Spirit and a new heart. Rather than fixing what’s wrong or doing what’s right, we need to release what’s good. A connection between elders and friends awakens within them what is powerful and good.

Are you really advocating that “eldering” can replace private-practice counseling?

There will always be a place for good therapists. But what they are doing is closer to what the Bible calls “shepherding” than what our culture calls “therapy.” And that has implications. I envision a community of shepherds and friends with the power to address the underlying issues beneath most of what we call “psychological problems.” But I now use the word “shepherding” more than “eldering.” People thought I was talking about the business people of the church. They said, “I wouldn’t go to the elders in my church.”



LARRY CRABB

“Rather than fixing what’s wrong ... we need to release what’s right.”

So a church should begin a “shepherding” program?

I’m loathe to introduce programming too soon. For example, Henri Nouwen discusses one of his “dark nights of the soul” and talks about an older priest who would take Nouwen’s head and pull it to his chest. The priest would hold it there in silent prayer for a length of time. That particular act, said Nouwen, expelled the demons of despair and would let him rise up with new vitality.

Now that was a good thing, but I don’t want to reduce this mysterious work of the Spirit to “Here’s what you do the next time this happens.” It’s too easy to reduce a wonderful idea to a technique and expect it to work every time.

If shepherding can’t be programmed, what’s the first step in moving a church toward your model?

What’s lacking most is the belief that ordinary relationships have power that has not been released. There needs to be teaching that shepherding and friendship can reach deeply into people’s souls. I’d love to see church mission statements include this. .



Where Healing Belongs *continued*

How are churches identifying members who can shepherd others?

A pastor friend in North Carolina has gotten together people and said, “Whom do we know in the church who seems to have a shepherd’s heart? With whom would we want to share our deepest problems?”

They identified ten or twelve people and formed “The Society of Shepherds.” They meet once a month to discuss what could happen and to swap stories about how they’ve been involved in somebody else’s life. They’re also getting training in how to listen well and what kind of categories to think in if somebody has a problem.

How does a shepherding relationship begin?

This is going to be difficult on both sides. The older person is not going to feel comfortable going to the young person and saying, “Would you like me to mentor you?” The younger person is not going to feel comfortable saying to the older person, “Could I talk with you?”

My wife and I are planning a group for five older and five younger couples. We’re hoping to meet weekly for ten weeks and say, “Would you be interested in hearing us old fogies talk about what we’ve learned? And can you help us see things we’ve forgotten that we need to remember?”

So these relationships would have a specific time period.

My vision is to develop a connected community of shepherds and friends. In a true community you have friends that last a lifetime and shepherds that can minister meaningfully in seasons. If you’re deeply involved with somebody as a friend, hopefully, that will not have an endpoint.

But there will be times when what I’m up against may require more wisdom than I have. That’s where somebody who—and I don’t know how to use this word properly—is “trained,” or seasoned, who fits the description of the biblical shepherd, can move into that person’s life for a definite season. It might be during a particularly hard time—after a divorce, perhaps, or after a child’s suicide. The shepherd can move into the life of someone in a more intense way.

The big push in recent years has been on accountability. I hear you saying the real need is for friendship.

People who emphasize accountability sometimes do it because they don’t know how to be friends. When accountability becomes the central tool, it falls under the moralistic model of “Do what’s right.” It’s essentially trying to accomplish change through pressure.

I’m trying to get my mind around what New Covenant realities can be released into one another. Can I speak to your good heart out of my good heart, and can that lead to something wonderful developing in both of us? I believe it can.

Discuss

1. What is an example of “carrying someone’s burden,” as mentioned in Galatians 6:2? When has someone done this for you? When have you done this for someone else?
2. To what extent are people shepherding one another in our church?
3. How could we encourage shepherding or “eldering”?



Why NonProfessionals Make Great Counselors

Your 5 advantages in caring for people.

Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-4

Professional therapists, the good and the biblical ones, have an important role to fill. But here are five advantages when nonprofessionals help a hurting person:

1. You care as a friend. When people come to you with problems, they come to someone who loves them. You aren't just a professional but an extension of the love of Christ, a channel of his grace. The Hebrew word for shepherding is closely aligned to the word for friend. That's what people need. You may not have all the answers, but you can love and listen. You may feel you're doing little good, but you can pray.

2. You build on an existing relationship. A therapist recently told me, "You have a real advantage because you're part of a person's life more than I can ever be. Counselors get intimate with people quickly; then we're gone. Pastors and lay people are in a person's life consistently. My role is short-term; yours is long-term, and it's the long-term role that usually proves more valuable."

Who but friends can do incisive, on-the-spot grief counseling at funerals, marriage counseling at weddings, bedside counseling in hospitals, and conflict resolution at committee meetings?

3. You can give biblical solutions for spiritual issues. Most people who approach Christians expect them to speak of spiritual realities. Many would be disappointed if their Bibles remained closed and their knees straight.

No, we can't reduce everything to an oversimplified, black-and-white, wave-the-Bible-at-it problem. But there is no better tool than Scripture for penetrating soul and spirit, joints and marrow, thoughts and intents. It is the Bible in all its authority—specifically the promises in all their sufficiency—that revives the soul, makes wise the simple, gives joy to the heart, and light to the eyes.

4. You are more accessible. Few professional therapists remain on call twenty-four hours a day. Maybe I don't either, for over the years I have learned to build some safeguards into my schedule and some hedges around my family. But I'm still generally more accessible than anyone listed in the Yellow Pages under "Psy-----." I have the opportunity to hurt more, to care more, to weep with those who weep and mourn with those who mourn.

5. Your fees. You are free. Even that counts for something.

—ROBERT J. MORGAN

Discuss

1. How comfortable do you feel helping someone with a problem? What makes you feel that way? What could make you feel more comfortable?
2. What would signal that you need to encourage someone to go to a pastor or counselor?
3. What do the two words "overseers" and "shepherds" in Acts 20:28 say about our role as church leaders?
4. Have you ever given "biblical solutions for spiritual issues"? How could you become more prepared to do that when it's needed?



Staying Close to Your “Enemies”

How to care for people who don't like you.

2 Timothy 2:22-26; 2 Corinthians 1:24-2:11

Church leaders need to maintain healthy relationships with all the people in the church, even those with whom that is difficult. But how do you shepherd people who don't like you—or whom you don't really like?

How well do I do this?
not well very well

1. Resist what comes naturally. One of our natural responses is to distance ourselves from difficult people. Instead, we can make it a point to seek out a difficult person and spend a few moments talking together. Even if our contact with the person doesn't solve a particular relational problem, it builds a bridge rather than a wall between us.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Invite talk about sensitive subjects. It's important to let people know that even subjects of conflict can be discussed; they don't end the relationship. I've had ongoing differences with one couple over the style of our worship service. We see each other regularly, and sometimes, when we are talking about something unrelated to worship, I will intentionally bring the subject into our conversation. I simply want them to know that we can disagree and still work together.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Keep private battles private. Just as a negative political ad campaign can generate sympathy for the opponent, so too can a public attack against someone in the church. The moral is, some things are best left unsaid. Don't make private battles public.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Practice acts of kindness. It's amazing what acts of kindness can do to build bridges to people! A man in a former church let me know every time I failed to fulfill some expectation of his. I stopped him after church one Sunday and said, “I was wondering if you might be available this next week to help me work on my fly fishing.” In the weeks after our fishing outing, he often warmly referred to the event in conversations with me and others.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Recognize that the best efforts may fall short. No approach to dealing with difficult people will be successful with all the people all the time. In Romans 12:18, the apostle Paul said, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Paul recognized that not everyone will want to live at peace with us. But the more I seek to love difficult people, the more God uses them to refine me into the image of Christ.

1 2 3 4 5

—GARY D. PRESTON

Discuss

- Which of these 5 principles would help you the most to care for people who are difficult?
- Suppose that someone refuses to maintain fellowship with you because of anger, hurt, or disagreement: What would you do in that situation?
- How can we best follow Paul's instruction in 2 Timothy 2:23 to avoid quarrels?



The Care and Feeding of Leaders

People with leadership gifts need a special kind of shepherding.

2 Timothy 2:1-2; Mark 3:13-14

In most church ministries, there are multiple leaders, and some need to guide and care for the others. Here's how.

Identifying leaders

- 1. Is there a desire to learn or grow?** We need to love and pray for everyone but put our energies into lives that are responsive and eager to grow.
- 2. Is there a willingness to give priority to time together?** Discipling demands commitment.

Application: Based on these two questions, which people in my areas of ministry are leaders or could become leaders?

Shepherding leaders

1. Spend time with them. The quality of interpersonal relationships will spell success or defeat. In most churches, it's impossible to know everybody intimately, but it is possible with a select group of leaders. This means spending time with them. Mark 3:14 tells us Jesus "appointed twelve ... that they might be with him." By the time the apostles were on their own, they had gained the reputation of being "little Christs." How did they get that way? By being with Jesus.

2. Teach them to obey the words of Jesus. In making a disciple, I teach him or her to obey the words of Jesus. God told Joshua that the key to his success would be obedience to the Word. It hasn't changed through the centuries. My effectiveness with my leaders is directly proportional to my helping them grow in their understanding of the Bible.

Realizing this a few years ago, I asked a group of men to meet me for Scripture memory and prayer while we had breakfast. They thought that was a great idea and selected six o'clock Monday morning! I so needed that fellowship that I stayed with it.

3. Plant ideas for ministry. One man had a superb approach to new ideas or program innovations. "If I have what I believe is a good idea, I plant it in the mind and heart of someone else and allow it to grow there. I do this by asking people what they think about it and to pray about it, without putting them under any pressure to approve it or support it. I think of ideas as seeds rather than bullets. I plant them rather than hit people with them. It takes longer this way, but the long-term results are far superior."

4. Communicate well. Good communication builds trust. The gospel accounts indicate that the Pharisees and other religious leaders were aloof from the people, while Jesus was with them. He understood them, began one of them, and they trusted him.

Application: Which of the above four tasks comes most naturally to me? Which could I work on?

—ROY C. PRICE

Discuss

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to spend a lot of time with a few people, rather than less time with many more people?
2. Have you ever caught the vision of someone merely because you spent time with him or her? What happened?
3. How well are our ministry leaders developing other leaders? How could we encourage more "shepherding of leaders"?



Comfort in the Face of Tragedy

How to help the hurting.

Isaiah 53:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:26; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

The Case My husband and I were eagerly awaiting the arrival of our first child. We did all the appropriate things: had regular check-ups, attended childbirth classes, prepared the nursery. It was an exciting time.

Then came "labor day." We drove to the hospital, and put into practice all we had learned in our childbirth classes. Soon our baby girl arrived!

It was immediately evident, however, that our new daughter was having major problems. She wasn't able to breathe. The doctors sprang into action. The next few hours were a confusing rush of emergency procedures, tests, and consultations. Then our little Karie went to surgery.

The surgery ended, and so did her short life. The doctors told us she had no lungs—"Just one of those things that happens sometimes."

My husband and I learned the hard way about dealing with a baby's death. The professionals who cared for me in the hospital were unsure of what to say and therefore said little. Our families, a thousand miles away, were hurting, too, and weren't able to offer us much strength because of their own pain.

- What Would You Do?**
- ◆ If you were in this couple's small group, what would you do to help them?
 - ◆ What could the entire group do to help them?
 - ◆ What would you say to this couple? What would you not say?

What Happened Some people try to salve everything with statements such as:

"You're young; you can have another baby."

"You have your other children to be thankful for."

"It must have been God's will."

"I know how you feel."

Such statements are not received well. The first and most important thing we can do for a bereaved couple is simply to be there and assure them of our availability. When our daughter died, I appreciated the visit from our assistant pastor's wife. She just sat and let me talk as I desired.

Another vivid memory is of a young nurse's aide on the night shift. She came into my room and boldly asked me what was wrong with my baby, because none of my records specified. When I told her, she listened carefully and compassionately. It was obvious she cared how I felt. I don't even know her name, yet I will always remember our midnight talk about my child.

—KAREN MOHLER

- Discuss**
1. What is your greatest fear when you're with someone who has suffered deep loss?
 2. Based on 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 and Isaiah 53:3-4, what hope can we offer the suffering?
 3. When tragedy strikes someone in our congregation, how can we ensure they are not overlooked?



Ministers of Healing

Every Christian is called to care.

Galatians 6:1-10

Read *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. . . . Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:2, 10).*

Comprehend Peter refers to believers as a holy and royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9). At the very end of the Bible, the same theme is repeated, that Christians are called to be a kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6).

Primarily, a priest is one who mediates between God and another person. A priest is a channel of forgiveness, grace, mercy, healing. A priest provides pastoral care. This is what God has called every believer to do and to be.

We are called into each other's life to be agents of all kinds of healing—emotional, relational, physical, mental, vocational. The Christian community provides a powerful healing climate. When “two or three are gathered,” the Holy Spirit's power is made manifest, just as Jesus promised. In that climate of love, one person may reveal a problem and the others listen and pray, and healing takes place. Openness and honesty, walking in the light—all are powerful medicines.

It has been said that only about one person in ten seeking counseling has special needs requiring professional help. The other 90 percent are well served by talking to a sympathetic person. For instance, early in this century, there was no cure for alcoholism. It was not until two untrained laymen discovered the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous that there was any concrete program for recovery.

We must, of course, refer extreme cases to a counseling service, but both by word and action we can say to one another: “You are ministers of healing.”

Three of our young singles were practicing cross-cultural mission in preparation for a mission trip to Mexico. A young man sitting on the curb asked them for money. They sat down with him. He was smelly, dirty, and unshaven but pleasant and friendly.

“Why do you need money?” they asked.

“I can't get a job.”

“Do you want one?”

“Oh, yeah, I want a job. I'll do anything.”

While one of the group sat with him, the other two covered both sides of the street, going into every store to ask if it was hiring. They discovered that a nearby pizza restaurant needed a dishwasher and arranged an interview for 1:00 the next day. The three took the young man home, got him some presentable clothes, and gave him a place to bathe and shave. He showed up at the restaurant the next day at twelve—an hour early—and got the job. And he kept the job. Later, he started coming to church and eventually became a Christian, part of our ministry of healing.

—BRUCE LARSON in *Mastering Pastoral Care*

- Discuss**
1. Do church members really believe that we can minister to each other, or do they really believe that's the pastor's job?
 2. When have you been helped by another person in a church?
 3. How can we encourage people to “carry each other's burdens” (Galatians 6:2)?



How to Give Good Advice

*Some people want you to listen;
others genuinely want you to speak.*

Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 25:11

I was having lunch with a psychologist. As we talked, she was asking me questions about her cases. Finally I said, "This is ludicrous. I've never studied counseling a day in my life. I'm a businessman, and you're a Ph.D. in psychology. Why are you asking me?"

"There's a difference between counseling and asking for advice," she said. "I come to you for good advice."

I was intrigued with her distinction. Counsel is guidance toward a better relationship, attitude, or lifestyle—things that can't be quantified or tightly scheduled. Advice is suggesting a specific action within a specific time frame, and it deals with factual things: purchases, job changes, decisions.

To know whether I can give advice, I ask myself three questions: Do I know enough about the situation? Am I qualified? Do I see viable options to recommend?

How to give advice

- 1. Analyze your experiences.** While experience is a valuable tool, it can also lead to bad advice if you don't know how to use it. Few situations are identical, and we cannot assume the differences are unimportant. The antidote is to analyze your experiences, to know why something worked. This means knowing the circumstances, the people involved, the aims, and what the times were. Then distinguish the transferable from the peculiar.
- 2. Offer advice only when asked.** People usually aren't ready to act until they're ready to ask.
- 3. Give only advice that can be used immediately.** Ralph Cordiner, former president of General Electric, was once talking about communications, and he said, "Communications are like supplies. If you've got an employee putting nuts and bolts in an appliance, you never give him more nuts and bolts than he can use." And you never give anybody more advice than he can use immediately.
- 4. Think through the problem and find the key log.** When loggers clear a logjam, the foolish ones start at the edge of the jam and start moving logs until things loosen up. The smart logger, however, climbs a tall tree and locates the key log, blows it, and lets the stream do the rest. With advice, the key is to find the crucial issue, which if accomplished, will affect other things.
- 5. Avoid snap judgments.** Even if you know you're right, sometimes it's best to take some time before offering your advice. Why? Because the other person may be skeptical of advice given too quickly.
- 6. Make sure the person understands what you've said.** I'm amazed when I talk with somebody for thirty minutes and then say, "Now tell me what you've heard me saying to you." The response often bears no resemblance to my intended advice. And the more emotional the issue, the less clearly people hear.
- 7. Restrain your curiosity.** Good advice always leave up to the person the option of taking the action. Advice says, "I'm convinced this is the best way, but it's your decision." Never say, "I'll call you tomorrow to be sure you've done this." Help people make the best decision they can; whether or not they carry it out is their responsibility.

—FRED SMITH

Discuss

1. What is the best advice you've ever received? What is the worst advice you've received? What made the difference?
2. Why does Proverbs encourage having many advisers?
3. In our church, who are some people who would be good counselors? Who would be good people to ask for advice?



Raising Up Shepherding Groups

4 questions to ask.

2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:1-8

Caring one-on-one contact can come through trained lay leaders in shepherding groups. But first, ask these key questions:

1. Who will be the lay shepherds? It's best not to ask for volunteers. Since ministering to the spiritual and psychological needs of others requires people with particular gifts, it is best to screen potential lay ministers for any evidence of personal, familial, or emotional "baggage" they might unwittingly foist on a group. Lay shepherds must have plenty of emotional energy to give to others.

In one church, the deacons and their wives are elected to share in the care ministry of the church. Additional couples are carefully invited into what has become the Shepherding Board of the church.

2. What type of training will we provide? Some churches recruit lay shepherds, assign groups, and then abandon them. Leaders need to offer training sessions to train lay shepherds and then follow up with refresher courses. Such a program typically combines formal teaching, on-the-job training, and a mentoring time with the head shepherd of the congregation. A sense of strong accountability, not only to the head shepherd but also to the team of shepherding leaders, results from frequent sessions together.

3. How should we form the shepherding groups? Some churches draw up geographical areas and assign each to a zone lay minister who lives in the area and exercises pastoral responsibility for each family in the assigned zone. Other churches design their shepherding plans on a relational basis, assigning people to homogeneous units or carefully selected heterogeneous groups.

Our experience indicates that natural relationships form more readily, and people network better, if the groups are homogeneous units drawn from adult Sunday school classes. About twelve households are represented in each group.

4. When should the shepherding groups meet? This varies from church to church. For example, some groups might meet in homes on the third Sunday evening of each month in lieu of the regular Sunday evening service. Some groups may want to meet bi-weekly. Others may wish to have dinner together after Sunday morning worship and then spend time in fellowship for an hour or two.

—CHARLES VER STRATEN. Adapted from *Leadership Handbook of Outreach and Care*. Used by permission of Baker Books, a division of Baker Book House Company, copyright © 1994. All rights to this material are reserved. Materials are not to be distributed to other web locations for retrieval, published in other media, or mirrored at other sites without written permission from Baker Book House Company. <http://www.bakerbooks.com>.

Discuss

1. How are pastoral-care shepherds like, and unlike, the traditional elder Paul spoke to in Titus 2?
2. In your opinion, how would most of our church members feel about receiving ministry from lay people rather than from church staff?
3. What would be the greatest benefit in raising up lay shepherds? The greatest hindrance to that?



Shepherding in the Shadow of Death

Helping people die with grace and hope.

Psalm 23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

In many ways our local hospital resembles our church. In both, people are in various stages of recovery. And in both, people are in various stages of dying. Christians have the privilege of shepherding people through the valley of death's shadow.

Such ministry is awesome—in both senses of the word. It is serious and intimidating business. What are the most meaningful things we can do for the dying? How can we sincerely say, "I care"? How can we make our visits more personal? What do we say if we are unsure of a person's relationship with God?

1. Make personal visits personal. Written reminders of our prayer and concern, though important, are not sufficient. A person near death longs for companionship and looks forward to visits from pastor and people.

Madeleine L'Engle, in her book *The Summer of the Great Grandmother*, reflects on her mother's death. She insists that dying, by definition, must be experienced in community: "Death is not a do-it-yourself activity." When visiting, holding a person's hand, patting his or her cheek, or gently placing your hand on a fevered brow conveys much.

2. Focus on biblical promises. It means a great deal to the sick person if we read a favorite passage of his or hers. Discovering those treasured portions is as simple as asking. For a Christian aware of approaching death, nothing penetrates the heart like Scripture.

3. Pray, helping people focus on eternity. Along with asking God to minimize physical discomfort and envelop the patient with a tangible sense of his presence, we can help people turn their eyes and hopes on the glory that awaits them. We might simply ask: "Are you afraid of what's ahead?" "How are you feeling about leaving your family?" "Do you feel ready to meet the Lord?"

Such questions give a dying person opportunity to express a desire for assurance. Then we can read Scriptures such as Psalm 23, John 14, Romans 8, and 1 Corinthians 15. Such passages indicate that God's companionship is available on the other side of the border. Using Revelation 7 as a backdrop, I sometimes invite a person to visualize the throne room of heaven and hear the voices of worship.

4. When appropriate, give permission to die. Sometimes the family, especially a spouse, has difficulty adjusting to what lies ahead. That's when we need to help the family give the dying person permission to die. In God's health-care plan, healing doesn't always mean getting better now; sometimes it means resurrection.

5. Offer to care for the survivors. My friend Scott, a funeral director, routinely concludes his remarks at the committal service with a pointed challenge. He invites those gathered to remember the spouse and immediate family members with a call, a card, or a visit a month down the road, at six-month intervals, and especially on the anniversary of the loved one's death. This is one of the most practical ways we can help someone who's dying: assuring them we'll comfort and care for their surviving loved ones.

—GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS (From *Building Your Church Through Counsel & Care*, Bethany House, 1997)

Discuss

1. How does Psalm 23 speak to your heart when you contemplate your own death?
2. When have you observed someone minister well to the dying? What helpful things did this person do?
3. How can our church improve its ministry to those who are dying?



Exercises in Caring

Learning to listen, learning to trust.

Matthew 22:36-40; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Rock of My Salvation

Materials: One rock.

List open-ended statements, starting with light subjects, then moving to deeper issues. Samples:

- ◆ My second favorite color
- ◆ My favorite food and a memory attached to it
- ◆ Mama always said...
- ◆ What I like most about our church
- ◆ The funniest thing that ever happened at our church
- ◆ How I came to faith in Christ
- ◆ Something I've been praying about for a long time

Ask one volunteer to hold the rock. Read the first statement aloud. The person holding the rock completes the statement, then passes the rock to someone else. Then pose the next statement.

Discuss: What makes it hard to really listen to others? How can we listen better to people in need?

Shield of Faith

Materials: Bible, poster paper, markers.

Give each person a sheet of poster paper. Have them cut the paper into the shape of a shield. With a marker, divide the shield into six sections by drawing one vertical line and two horizontal lines.

Select a biblical account that demonstrates how Jesus ministers to those in need: the woman at the well, the man born blind, etc. Read the account aloud. Ask the group to listen for the person's problem, Jesus' action, and the outcome. In the left column, draw three objects, one each representing the problem, the action, and the outcome.

Now, give the group time to think about a time in their lives when they had a problem and experienced God's grace through the caring of other Christians. Or they may have been the caregiver. Have them draw three objects in the right column representing the problem, the action, and the outcome.

Ask volunteers to present their "Shield of Faith."

Thank-You Notes

Materials: note cards.

In *What to Do When You Don't Know What to Say* (Bethany House, 2000), Mary Ann Froelich and Peggy Sue Wells collected short accounts of simple acts of ministry:

"When my son went to prison, I was broken hearted. The despair was indescribable. With very few exceptions, no one knew what to say or how to ease my grief. Many were quick to judge. One friend left a candy bar on my desk at work once a week for the length of my son's prison term. Another friend left flowers. I knew they cared about me. I knew they prayed for my son."

"My dad died on a Wednesday. Every Wednesday throughout the first year of my grief, I found garden flowers and encouraging notes on my porch. My friend's weekly gift spoke to my heart: 'I remember your pain. Hope in the spring to come during the winter of your soul.'"

Discuss: How can we become more sensitive to the needs of others? What are some unusual ways our church can minister in times of death, pain, and loss? Have each person write a thank-you note for an unexpected and special display of caring. Ask volunteers to read their notes.

—ERIC REED



Further Exploration

8 helpful resources.

Leadership Journal—Special Issue on “Spiritual Care.”

The premier practical journal for church leaders devoted an issue to “Spiritual Care,” which includes outstanding articles by Eugene Peterson, Gary Preston, and others. Read this issue online for free: www.leadershipjournal.net, click on “Archives,” scroll down and click on the issue.

Building Your Church through Counsel and Care: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry *edited by Marshall Shelley*

Practical guidance on counseling, support groups, comforting people in grief, and more (Bethany House, 1997; ISBN: 1556619669).

Leadership Handbook of Outreach and Care *edited by James D. Berkley*

This compendium on church leadership devotes a major section to pastoral care and counseling. Helpful for church staff and ministry teams who need practical guidance (Baker, 1994; ISBN 0801090423).

Biblical Counseling for Today *by Jeffrey Watson*

From the Swindoll Leadership Library. Watson says Christian counselors need to help others learn three fundamental skills for spiritual and emotional health: how to tell their stories; how to set wise goals; and how to practice change in their lives (Word, 2000; ISBN 0849913586).

Christian Counseling: A Complete Resource for Professional and Pastoral Counselors

A comprehensive software package, available in 2001 at www.nelsonword.com (ISBN 0785214348).

Shepherding the Church *by Joseph M. Stowell*

Stowell encourages Christians to learn to care for people in the church by considering what matters to Christ—by focusing on the heart of our Shepherd (Moody, 1997; ISBN 0802478212).

Encouragement: The Key to Caring *by Larry Crabb and Dan Allender*

Suggests ways for lay ministers, small-group leaders, and other ministry leaders to foster spiritual care in the church (Zondervan, 1990; ISBN 0310225914).

Bold Love *by Dan Allender, et al.*

Today's version of love can often be equated with being “nice”—giving in, making compromises, getting along. Allender suggests the biblical concept of love, as modeled by Jesus, looks nothing like a safe version of civility but is an aggressive, passionate and courageous transforming power (NavPress, 1993; ISBN 0891097031).



Sample Retreat Schedule

How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of "Shepherding Others"

SMALLGROUPS.COM Training Themes expand easily into a retreat format. Here is a sample retreat schedule for "Shepherding Others." The purpose of this retreat is to help key church leaders understand how to provide effective care to others.

Friday Evening

◆ 8-8:45 P.M. **Opening Session:** Hand out copies of "Where Healing Belongs," the interview with Larry Crabb on pages 4-5, and allow time for each person to read it. Then have everyone find a partner to discuss the questions at the bottom of the page. Reconvene for the final 20 minutes and invite individuals to share their reactions to the idea of "eldering" or shepherding.

◆ 9-9:45 P.M. **Practical Training 1:** Pass out copies of "Comfort in the Face of Tragedy" by Karen Mohler (p. 9) or "Shepherding in the Shadow of Death" by Greg Asimakoupoulos (p. 14). Discuss how you can care for people when death comes.

Saturday Morning

◆ 9-9:45 A.M. **Devotional:** Open the day with the devotional from Oswald Chambers, "What It Takes to Care for Others" (p. 10). The questions at the bottom of the page will help your group open up to each other. Or use the Bible study, "The Power of Caring for People," on page 3. You can either photocopy and distribute the study or use the handout as your notes.

◆ 10-11 A.M. **Practical Training 2:** Then pass out copies of "How to Give Good Advice" by Fred Smith on page 12. Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page. If you have time remaining, describe to the group a difficult situation in life and ask them what advice they would give to someone in that situation.

◆ 11-NOON. **Activity:** Lead your group through the Listening and Trusting Exercises on page 15.

◆ NOON. Lunch

Saturday Afternoon

◆ 1-2 P.M. **Final Group Session:** Close the retreat with "Raising Up Shepherding Groups" by Charles Ver Straten (page 13). Brainstorm ideas that might bring about caring change in your church. Then pray together, asking God for guidance and wisdom as you take these new steps together.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other SMALLGROUPS.COM Training Themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.