

LIGHT



MENTORING

CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial: Clearing the Way
- 6 We All Need a Mentor
- 15 Teaching and Learning
- 20 A Discipleship System
- 28 Puzzle: Mentoring
- 30 Live and Learn: Lessons From Ruth and Naomi
- 36 Home-Grown Mentoring
- 42 Mentoring Younger Generations

LIGHT

Copyright © 2024

Executive Editor: Jeri Lyn Rogge

Assistant Editor: Richard Clark Jr.

Layout & Design: Taumi Hartnell

Light is published six times a year in large print, audio, and braille for readers who are legally blind. The cost of production is contributed by businesses and individuals. Donations are welcome. Send donations and correspondence to *Light*, Christian Record Services, PO Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.

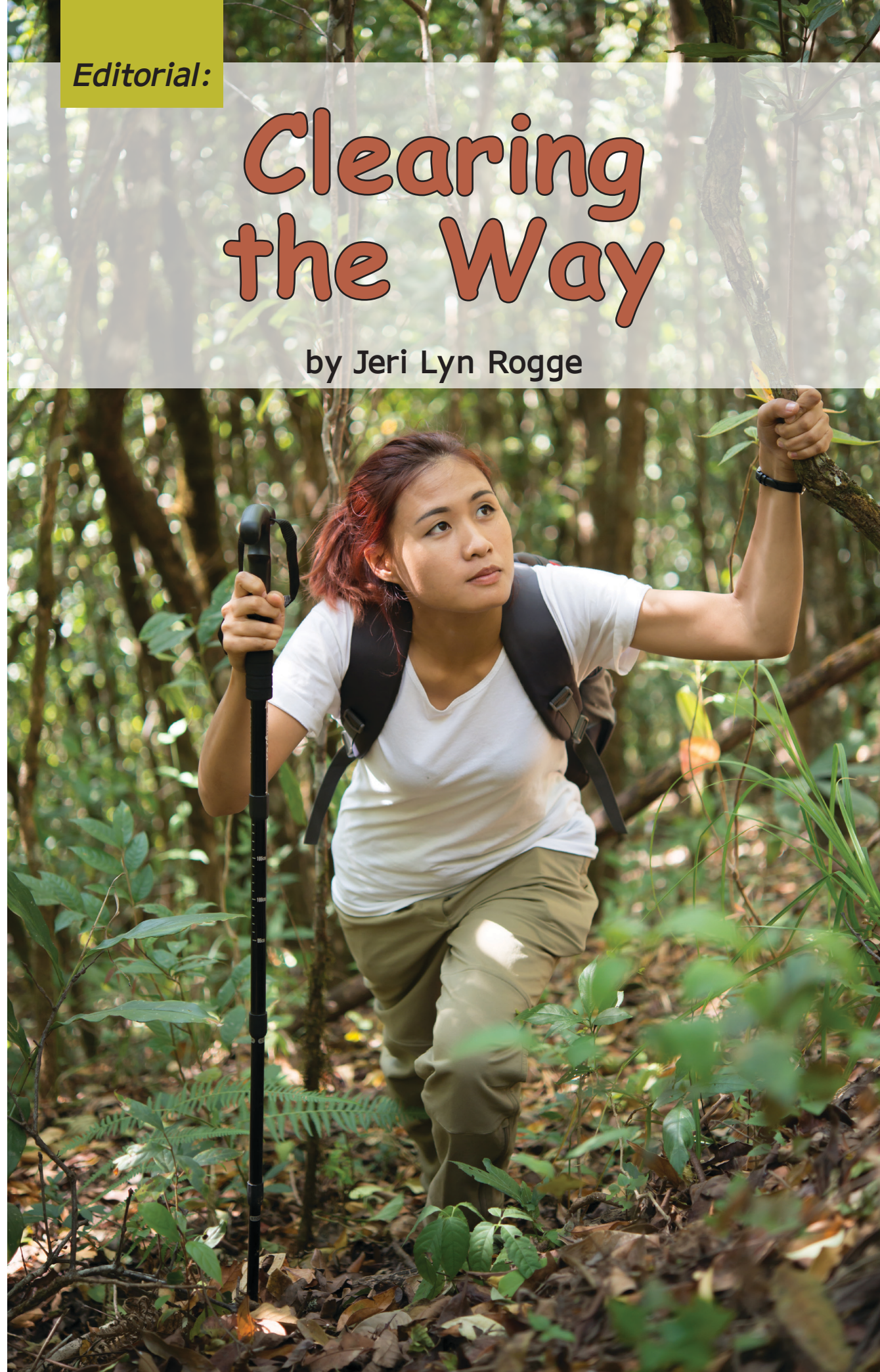
Contact us at 402.488.0981 or
editor@christianrecord.org.

125
YEARS
CHRISTIAN RECORD
— SERVICES FOR THE BLIND —

Editorial:

Clearing the Way

by Jeri Lyn Rogge



“I do it myself!” My toddler son marched to the toilet, and my anxious mama heart resisted the urge to follow him. His father and I did all we could to help our headstrong tyke gain this independence, including reminders to not allow playtime to distract him to the point of having an accident. Some days were better than others, of course.

I took deep breaths while I waited inches from the door, which he also insisted on closing himself. *He'll tell me if he needs me.* Little did I know this moment was the first of many mentoring successes for our son. He did great, by the way, and potty trained within a week. My friends were shocked!

“How did you do it?” Honestly, I couldn't pinpoint any particular “ah-ha” moment. Years later, I realized he learned what he needed from us, his mentors, in the form of Mom and Dad. Any parent or caregiver who has toilet trained children recalls the relief of bidding that part of babyhood farewell.

This issue of *Light* explores various ways to approach mentoring. Some say systems are best, and others want to go with the flow. I'm in the “and” camp: I like systems and will adapt or set them aside as needed. Perhaps you have ways you prefer to teach or learn, to be a mentor or mentee.

Ultimately, the goal of a mentoring relationship is to leave the pupil or student on the path to success, whether in academics,

interpersonal skills, finance, hobbies, discipleship, or the career world. Sometimes, the mentor or teacher also learns and grows during this process.

Much like a jungle explorer slashing vines and brush to clear the way for those behind him, a mentor uses their wisdom and experience to remove barriers, deliver information, and offer support as the mentee moves from uncertainty to confidence, from dependence to independence.

Perhaps you enjoyed the experience of working with someone ready to soar with a new skill learned under your tutelage. Your pupil might have said something like, “Thanks so much! I have it from here,” or “You helped me navigate a tricky project. I know what to do next time.” Maybe they said, “You saw in me what I didn't see in myself. Thank you!”

Through God's mentorship, His followers have the potential to do good in the world. If you haven't yet enjoyed being a mentor, I hope the following essays will inspire you. Pray the Lord will put people in your path who can benefit from your wisdom, expertise, and friendship. Maybe you'll also learn more about yourself along the way.

Jeri Lyn Rogge is the director of editorial and outreach ministries at Christian Record Services in Lincoln, Nebraska.

WE ALL NEED A MENTOR

by Omar Miranda



A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

I want to tell you the story of Sean (name changed). It was 2008, and my family and I had just transferred from a small church to a larger church. I connected with an 8th-grade graduate who spent his summer in our youth group. He struggled with pornography, as I had in the past, and was brutally honest with me about his life — every aspect of his life. I listened to him talk about his goals, dreams, successes, failures, and frustrations — and this became an organic mentorship.

As Sean matured, graduated high school, began college, and initially struggled to find a major he loved and excelled at, I was there for him. When his father got cancer and ultimately died, I was there for him. When he graduated and wanted to get a post-bachelor's education, I was there for him. He is extremely satisfied with — and amazing at — what he does for a living. I still check in with him occasionally, but now it's me checking in with him more than him checking in with me. And although I miss him dearly, I realize he no longer needs to depend upon that relationship as much. The mentoring relationship has worked!

It's important to note I have sought out and am presently receiving mentoring. This issue of mentoring is not specific to a certain age and stage of life. Being a Christian and having access to the Holy Spirit does not negate that we all need others to make it through this life.

“Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble” (Proverbs 13:20, NLT). This wisdom is timeless and correct.

In 1 Kings 12:1-20 is the story of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son. When faced with a significant challenge, he had the opportunity to treat the people in his kingdom better than his father had. Before making this critical decision, he asked for the opinions of his advisors and peers. However, he chose to listen only to the views of his peers. He didn’t consider any alternative perspectives or attitudes.

Because of this, his people suffered, and they ultimately revolted. What’s the takeaway here? You could lose a lot in life if you only have a narrow perspective. The wider your viewpoint on an issue, the clearer you can see the problems and, by extension, the solutions.

So, how can you ensure you make wise decisions? The answer is simple but not easy: Mentoring!

WHAT IS A MENTOR?

A mentor is someone willing to develop a relationship and be a resource to another person. They are focused on helping you reach your goals, not the mentor’s goals or plans or hidden agendas. This certainly applies to youth and preventing dangerous behaviors.

Some measurable values in mentoring have been clearly demonstrated in several studies.

A 1998 report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stated that youth are protected from violence by having mentors who provide career role modeling. The U.S. Department of Justice reports research conducted in 1992 by Big Brothers and Sisters of America to identify the value of mentoring relationships. Their findings demonstrated that mentored youth are:

- 46% less likely to initiate drug use; 70% less likely if they were of a minority race.
- 27% less likely to initiate alcohol use.
- 53% less likely to skip school.
- 37% less likely to skip class.
- More than 30% less likely to hit someone.
- More confident in their schoolwork.
- Able to get along better with their family.

The California Mentor Foundation (2000) reports that of 57,000 mentored youth:

- 98.4% stayed in school.
- 85.25% did not use drugs.
- 97.9% did not become a teen parent.
- 98.2% did not join a gang.

CHRISTIAN MENTORING?

You might be surprised to learn the Bible has a lot to say about mentoring. Here’s just a sampling:

- Moses was mentored by Jethro, his father-in-law. In Exodus 18, Moses had difficulty serving as the sole judge for the children

of Israel. Jethro came alongside and counseled Moses on how best to reach his goals, not Jethro's.

- Moses mentored Joshua (Exodus 17).
- Elijah mentored Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).
- Eli mentored Samuel (1 Samuel 3).
- In the New Testament, Jesus mentored His 12 disciples.
- Saul/Paul was mentored by Barnabas. God sent Barnabas to encourage and befriend Saul (Acts 11; 13:1-3).
- Paul mentored Timothy and Titus (Acts 16:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:1-6; 10-17; Titus 2).
- The early church "power couple," Aquila and Priscilla, mentored Apollos (Acts 18:18-28).

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MENTORING

1. Mentors are at least 83 years old. I'd advise you to ignore age when selecting a mentor. Look for a person you respect and like and from whom you want to learn. Younger protégés look at mentors as "older," but mentors look at mentees over 30 simply as "adults." As a protégé, you may be constantly aware of the age difference. If you are over 30, your mentor probably sees you as a young adult friend. The relationship is adult to adult, not adult to child.

2. Mentors must be perfect! The fact is mentees don't expect a mentor to be perfect or share details about their past failures. This may be the reason why so many hesitate to become mentors. The bottom line is mentors are not perfect, and they don't need to be.

3. Mentors must have all the answers. Instead, mentors are human. They do not have all the answers. They never will have all the answers. Fundamentally, a mentor connects a protégé to resources: his personal network, appropriate seminars, libraries, helpful videos and books, and even support groups. He is simply a connector to many resources the protégé needs during the growth process. As a mentor, your attitude should be, "I'm here to help you, and I'll do what I can."

4. The mentoring process involves a curriculum the mentor needs to teach a mentee. Believe me, no such curriculum exists. The mentoring process is unique to each protégé. Learning is based on the protégé's agenda, priorities, questions, and needs, not the mentor's preset program. Within a trust relationship, mentees can ask questions they would never feel comfortable asking most people. They learn best when their need to know is greatest. Therefore, the most teachable moment of any protégé's life is the few seconds immediately following a sincere question. No curriculum, checklist, or theory could replace a mentor's life experience and compassion in

such a teachable moment.

5. A mentor's focus is holding a protégé accountable. My observation is that many people focus on accountability for one of two reasons: They enjoy holding others to account, but they do not want to be held accountable, or they lack self-control and shift that responsibility to someone else. Obviously, both motivations are unhealthy and would be detrimental to a mentoring relationship. Accountability should not be the focus of the mentoring relationship. The focus should be supporting, strengthening, and encouraging.

HOW TO BEGIN THE PROCESS

If you are interested in searching for a mentor, the first and most important thing is to pray intently about it. God will bring you to the right person, but you must take the first step and ask Him.

Additionally, asking several friends and family who know you well, care about you, and will be honest is a great idea. Ask them what type of person they think would be a good fit for you.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A MENTOR

The following checklist is to help you find the ideal mentor. If you already have a person in mind, this checklist will only confirm your intuitive guess that this person would make a

great mentor.

The checklist is also helpful if you have two or three mentors to consider but cannot determine which one you will ask. The mentoring checklist can bring out a few fine points that may help you make your final decision.

Before you choose a mentor, check to see if your ideal mentor is:

- Honest with you.
- A model for you.
- Deeply committed to you.
- Open and transparent.
- A natural teacher.
- One who believes in your potential.
- One who can help you define your dream and develop a plan to turn your dream into reality.
- Successful in your eyes.
- Open to learning from you as well as teaching you.
- Willing to stay primarily on your agenda, not their own.

A WORD TO THE MENTORS

Mentoring, specifically in Christian ministry leadership, is essential because your mentees may be gifted by God but are inexperienced. In life and ministry, they need your help hearing and interpreting God's voice, call, and will to effectively and maturely live the Christian life

— not just as leaders but as Christians and whole people! Mentoring is a great need within the Christian church, and it needs to happen with much more frequency and intensity.

As you search for a mentor, be careful not to forget the simple truth that what you're really looking for is a person who you know cares for you, believes in you, and encourages you. A good mentor is a person who you naturally enjoy being with, who has more experience than you have (in your specific field of study or in life because they're older than you), who would be happy to help you win in life, and who would help you grow in sensitive areas most other friends "put up with" on a day-to-day basis. If you have found this person, you have found a mentor.

Omar Miranda is an author, certified Christian counselor, youth leader, and lay pastor from Plainville, Georgia. This article originally appeared on the April 3, 2024, Message magazine blog (www.messagemagazine.com), and this adaptation is published with permission.

Photo credits:

Cover — Freepik: jcomp

Page 3 — Freepik

Pages 6, 20, 27, 36, 42 — Pexels: Any Lane \ Tima

Miroshnichenko \ Fauxels \ Yan Krukau \ RDNE Stock project

Page 15 — Vecteezy: Suriyawut

Pages 28, 29 — AdobeStock

Page 30 — Wikimedia: Julius Schnorr Carolsfeld

Back cover — Christian Record Archives

Teaching and Learning

by Barbara Loos



My first mentor was my sister, Lauren. Fourteen months older than I am and also blind, she blazed the trail for me throughout our childhood. Our brother, Lani, five years older than Lauren, set an excellent example for us regarding expectations. He knew we were blind, of course, but that didn't mean we were less than others, just different.

On the rare occasions when our parents asked him to be in charge while they were out somewhere, we usually had a lot of fun. For instance, around the Fourth of July, instead of putting on a light show, he lit explosives under cans, launching them into a tree and rustling the leaves on their ascent and descent. He enjoyed hiding Easter eggs for us because he could put some in plain sight, like on the piano bench. I later learned that you can do that for some sighted children because they get so busy looking under things that they don't focus on visually obvious places.

One of the first things Lauren taught me was to carry a tune. She loved creating music and wanted someone with whom to harmonize. Once I understood what to do, we shared music for many years as a duo and with others. The last time we sang and played guitars together was for our parents' 70th wedding anniversary celebration in 2013. She taught me many other things — how to touch and hold things gently, speak up for myself, and appreciate tactile art, to name a few.

On May 31, 2021, my first and much-loved mentor died. I am often reminded of her as I continue exploring our Creator's world.

When I was 8 years old, I attended Gene Eppley Salvation Army Camp for the first time. It was there I invited my lifelong mentor, Jesus Christ, into my heart. From that time to this, He continuously cultivates the fruit of the Spirit in me — "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control" — as I ask Him to guide my every step (Galatians 5:22-23, ESV).

As a young adult, I met Kenneth Jernigan, then director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind and president of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). During this time, I was an employee of the then Nebraska Services for the Visually Impaired (now the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired). When offered the opportunity to visit any agency for the blind to learn about its programs, a blind colleague and I chose to visit Iowa. I felt conflicted about the mixed messages I heard about Dr. Jernigan and the Iowa Commission for the Blind. So, while at the commission office, we took the opportunity to talk with Dr. Jernigan.

When the subject of the National Federation of the Blind came up, I said it felt like things were going well in Iowa. However, the chapter in my area seemed like more of a social group than one advocating for blind people.

The question Dr. Jernigan asked in response changed my life: "And what are you doing about that?" He asked it gently and waited patiently for my response.

I was stunned. What I had just done was badmouth a local chapter of the organization Dr. Jernigan led without ever having done anything to help. That question remains with me to this day, stopping me in my tracks if I'm thinking something negative and giving me pause as I make a decision. Because it doesn't speak to the past or the future, it compels me to be in the present moment. It opens me to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to hear and to do God's Word, as James instructs: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, NKJV).

Over 30 years after this encounter, I participated in an initiative of the NFB's Center for Mentoring Excellence, in which 20 mentors and 20 mentees in Nebraska, along with similar groups in other states, committed to two years of working together as teams. Over the years, I engaged in connections with blind youth, but this was the first time I had done it as part of a program that was deliberately seeking to explore this dynamic. This was a beautiful time of growth and sharing for my assigned mentee and me.

Three months into our time together, we co-wrote an article, "United We Stand," which first appeared in the summer 2006 publication of

the Federation's magazine for parents of blind children, *Future Reflections*. We later recited a duet poem she wrote at her high school. Our relationship continues to this day. My biggest takeaway from that experience was learning in-person proximity connects us most deeply, no matter how much people interact through phone calls and emails.

By the way, mentees aren't always younger than mentors, and we don't always know when we're mentoring someone. After the 2024 state convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska in Gering, a lady my age called to say watching me use braille at the convention had inspired her to learn it. Her eyesight is waning, and she wants to have a way to write notes she can read herself. I invited her to write to me sometime. I hope she does.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up" (NIV). As I continue through life as both mentor and mentee, I am grateful to mentors who offer me a hand up. I hope to do the same for others.

Barbara Loos is a writer, mentor, disability advocate, and Christian Record Services Advisory member. She writes from Lincoln, Nebraska.

A Discipleship System

by Dexter Thomas



Through a series of events that could only have been orchestrated by God, I was hired as the new pastor of a Northern California church I'd preached and ministered to more than 15 years ago. Right away, I hungered to mentor this congregation into embracing a culture of outreach, preparing them to warmly greet visitors and love on them as they considered becoming members.

But what did I have to offer a church to grow? I recalled being encouraged by a seminar by a ministry colleague about living an evangelistic life. Inspired by that presentation, I developed a four-module discipleship course for my members.

PHASE ONE: Share Your God Story

Experiences leading you to surrender your life to God make up your testimony or "God story." I wanted my members to share their God stories because it highlighted how to recognize major turning points, understand where they are with God, and rekindle the fire of their first love. Starting with our testimonies defines our why, as Christians, we still say "no" to temptations and "yes" to God.

To begin, I invited the members to share their testimonies. This discipleship system is designed for people to share one-to-one rather than deliver a public presentation. It's not preaching practice; it is sharing practice.

I welcomed people to stand and share, and one after another gave their testimonies. What a powerful start to my ministry at this church! We wept or shouted “Amen!” as people shared how God intervened in their lives.

Following this sharing time, I encouraged people to write their God stories and rehearse the details. Writing gives greater clarity, helps us get to the heart of the matter, and weeds out what doesn’t make sense. Then, I counseled members about what not to share. Don’t get bogged down by the gory details of their past life — no glorifying of sin. Instead, lift up the sweetness of the Savior. Don’t minimize hardships after accepting Christ because it wouldn’t be real life. I encouraged my members to keep their stories to three minutes. Why? It is probably all they’ll have when sharing with a stranger.

PHASE TWO: Engaging Relationships and Friendships

Next, I asked the members to think about the people they communicate with most frequently. These could be past or present co-workers, classmates, neighbors, or others. I then encouraged them to create a prayer list, including two or three who are not Christians. We were to pray for these connections daily at a set time. Creating this list is crucial because it focuses our prayers and gets us outside of our

Christian “bubble.” When we pray for someone, it changes our hearts as well.

One of my fears was that the members would treat their lists and the people on them like a project. So, I identified red flags, signaling when it’s no longer a prayer list:

- When there’s no joy in the process.
- When we objectify people, regarding them as a project needing to be “straightened out.”
- When we think people are changed by our persuasive words instead of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- When we operate absent genuine interest in the person’s well-being.
- When we aim only to “make” Christians.
- When we believe we score points with God for doing our good deed for the day.

Despite these potential downsides, create the list and pray because God opens hearts — not our strategies or clever words. I wanted the members to pray for their list consistently, so I encouraged them to schedule the same time every day. Create reminders, such as before or after a meal or a daily routine, like walking the dog, parking the car, or arriving at work.

I didn’t want us to pray for people without intentionally showing up in their lives as the arms, feet, and voice of Jesus. I wanted them to intentionally show friendship and kindness using their gifts. What are they good at? Can they use their love languages for others?

Genuine kindness and generosity are how our hearts open to one another. It softens hearts and prepares people to hear about God since they have already seen His love demonstrated.

PHASE THREE: Ways To Build Connections

This is really getting to know the person and understanding their lives. As prompts, I gave the acronym FOR: Family, Occupation, and Recreation. Why use these conversation starters? They help us find common ground and mutual interests.

I addressed potential negative attitudes when engaging with people who don't live and believe like us. These may hinder us from genuinely caring and showing interest in getting to know people without strings attached. Our struggle with accepting others may involve thinking they must be fixed because they are in error or broken. We feel it is our God-given duty to straighten them out.

Acceptance is modeling how God loves people as they are rather than how they ought to be. We perfect the art of acceptance when we speak less and listen more. Asking clarifying questions helps us become more patient and shows genuine interest in them and their stories. This dignifies their humanity.

Many of us have been taught to be combative and highlight our uniquenesses

rather than our similarities. We may be driven by the fear that we might never get another opportunity to correct their mistakes, and we want to broadcast where we stand right away. We think the bad things these individuals do make up their whole person. So, if they smoke or drink, it's assumed there is nothing good about them.

How can we become more agreeable? Believe that people already have good concepts by which they live their lives. Affirm the good they are doing because what we affirm grows. It opens hearts to becoming receptive to what we have to share. We get more of the behavior we encourage, and people respond favorably when their good is affirmed.

PHASE FOUR: Windows of Opportunities Through Cares, Crises, and Curiosities

Windows of opportunities are events and issues in people's lives that cause them to see they need help. These can be a care they have, a crisis they are going through, or a curiosity they seek to understand. Identifying windows is being conscientious and aware of people. We tend to be selfish, which blinds us to seeing people's hunger for the Savior.

I selected "cares, crises, and curiosities" because I like alliterations. More than that, I didn't want members to think people only seek

God during a crisis. I defined care as an ongoing nagging burden. A crisis is a tragedy that leaves the person devastated and deeply wounded. A curiosity is a question or issue for which they pursue answers, clarity, or understanding.

This is where I returned to attitude because it's easy to turn windows of opportunity into manipulative traps. I pointed out that indoctrinating others when they are hurt or vulnerable is unethical. Instead, strive to listen and be present rather than rushing to provide "quick fixes."

How do we use a window of opportunity? This is where we share with the people something in common — a care, crisis, or curiosity, which God resolved. It's how God showed up and brought you to where you are now in Christ. This could be a burden or problem you entrusted to God, resulting in a faith-strengthening victory. It might be a devastating event that could have destroyed you, but God delivered and forever changed your outlook on life. Maybe it was a perplexing issue God resolved and used to cement your belief in Him and His Word.

After these four steps, I teach members to invite their connections appropriately. If it's in response to a curiosity, it might lead to a Bible study; if it's a care, they might need prayer; if it's a crisis (death, divorce, disaster), they might need help through local resources. They have needs; here, through the Lord's leading,

might be where they may find answers. It's sharing because you care.

Dexter Thomas is a pastor and freelance writer from American Canyon, California.



Learn and Grow With Us!

PhoneFaith offers US members opportunities for learning, mentoring, and fun.

If you haven't yet sampled a PhoneFaith program, please accept our invitation to join a call today!

Call 209-399-9465 and mention that you heard about PhoneFaith through *Light* magazine.



Mentoring

by Richard Clark Jr.

"Ointment and incense make the heart rejoice, likewise the sweetness of one's friend from sincere counsel" (Proverbs 27:9, NET).

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Accomplish | ☐ Inform |
| ☐ Admonish | ☐ Instruct |
| ☐ Advisor | ☐ Knowledge |
| ☐ Aiding | ☐ Learning |
| ☐ Aspire | ☐ Patience |
| ☐ Complete | ☐ Pattern |
| ☐ Consult | ☐ Perfecting |
| ☐ Counsel | ☐ Perseverance |
| ☐ Demonstrating | ☐ Planning |
| ☐ Edification | ☐ Prepare |
| ☐ Encourage | ☐ Purpose |
| ☐ Equipped | ☐ Reasoning |
| ☐ Example | ☐ Resolve |
| ☐ Exhort | ☐ Serving |
| ☐ Explain | ☐ Solving |
| ☐ Foundation | ☐ Success |
| ☐ Guidance | ☐ Trained |
| ☐ Helpful | ☐ Tutor |
| ☐ Illustration | ☐ Understanding |
| ☐ Impart | ☐ Wisdom |



G A E X A M P L E P Q A I G N I V R E S
N M R O F N I G N I N R A E L R O T U T
I E G N I T C E F R E P S S E C C U S I
V E X H O R T A I L L U S T R A T I O N
L R E P L A N N I N G H E L P F U L A E
O I G L L I E C N A R E V E S R E P S G
S O A E U A B S V Z Q R N K N N E O N G
N S R R M H I Y X U L A N R T T R I C B
R E U I S P V N I J E O E O E E T E U G
O V O P D I P P E E W T N L A A D A L U
S L C S P R P C T L T O P S R I C E F I
I O N A E E N C E A I M O T F C S T A D
V S E P D E U D P T O N S I O N R T H A
D E A S I R G W A C I N C M U A L S D N
A R T T T E M D G N O A P O I U I L P C
E I A S N O N N G M T L C N S N S C M E
E P N C D U I K E I I R E N O M L E H F
E I N S O D F D O S E D O M T R A P M I
D R I F I L X N H R A C D E S O P R U P
A W S A M G G N I D N A T S R E D N U R

Live and Learn:

Lessons From Ruth and Naomi

by Rhianna McGregor Hajzer



Mentorship has often been an enigmatic practice — or so I believed. Its roles were undefined and usually blurred over time, responsibilities ambiguous, and goals unclear. Even so, having a mentor was a sign of maturity, and being one was even more admirable. Yet, without definition, it is doomed

to fail, leaving the mentee and mentor lacking the richness and depth that a godly mentoring relationship can bring. It was elusive, and my experiences never lived up to the touted benefits. However, Scripture shows principles for biblical mentorship, and the Word defines and exemplifies the roles and responsibilities of this relationship.

The relationship between Jesus and His disciples is the paramount model of biblical mentorship, demonstrating the qualities godly mentors and mentees must embody for the relationship to prosper. Jesus exudes grace, patience, and an unrelenting desire to see His disciples mature in their faith. In their humanity, the disciples do not always encompass the attributes necessary for spiritual growth, like humility and trust. Despite their shortcomings, their narrative continually points Christians to the true center of biblical mentorship: Jesus Himself.

The apostle Paul patterned his life after Christ's example and instructed his readers to do the same: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1, ESV). There are more examples of biblical mentorship, and a beautiful story from the Old Testament illustrates this with profound depth, resilience, and humanity.

The story of Ruth and Naomi unfolds amid desperate circumstances — often the very ones where God's work is least expected yet most

evident. Naomi's husband, a respected Israelite leader, moves their family to Moab to escape famine and weds his sons to Moabite women despite God's prohibition.

When her husband and sons perish in Moab, Naomi decides to return to Israel. She urges her daughters-in-law to return to their fathers' homes. However, Ruth pledges her loyalty to Naomi, declaring, "Where you go I will go" (Ruth 1:16), and the women journey to Bethlehem.

After arriving in Israel, Ruth and Naomi begin their life together. Naomi is bitter, believing the Lord has forsaken her. Ruth is distinctly aware she is a distrusted foreigner. Naomi and Ruth exemplify biblical mentorship principles amid these all-too-familiar struggles of our humanity.

Believers can reap much wisdom from the story of Ruth and Naomi. Despite her struggles and bitterness over the loss of her husband and sons, Naomi patiently guides Ruth in the ways of Israel and her God. She takes Ruth under her wing, teaching her about the customs and practices of their faith and people. She instructs Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz, a relative of her late husband, who was known for his kindness (Ruth 2:2-3). This is a pivotal moment as it provides physical sustenance for Ruth and Naomi and places Ruth in the path of Boaz, who becomes her kinsman-redeemer. When the time comes, Naomi directs Ruth to

propose marriage according to their customs (Ruth 3:1-4). Naomi spurs Ruth on to hope and success, showing the profound impact a mentor can have by offering wisdom, support, and practical guidance.

Likewise, Ruth displays humility and malleability, proving herself willing to learn and grow in her faith under Naomi's care. Ruth's commitment to Naomi is evident from the beginning when she refuses to leave her side, declaring, "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16). This declaration marks Ruth's transition into a new life, land, and faith, guided by Naomi's experience and wisdom. Ruth's humility is demonstrated by her willingness to take on the lowly task of gleaning in the fields to provide for their physical needs, showing her dedication and respect for Naomi's advice (Ruth 2:7). Moreover, her proposition to Boaz on the threshing floor reflects her trust and obedience to Naomi's knowledge and instructions despite potential risks or misunderstandings (Ruth 3:5-9). In this way, Ruth exemplifies the traits of an ideal mentee — humility, teachability, and a willingness to embrace guidance for spiritual and personal growth.

The need for biblical mentors is unprecedented in a culture that espouses self-fulfillment, entitlement, and instant gratification. Mature Christians need to come

alongside young believers, teaching them the ways of the Lord and encouraging them to stand firm in their faith. New Christians and those seeking to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ must be willing to humble themselves to the wisdom of those who have walked the path before them. In a world increasingly hostile to Christ and His followers, mentorship is a precious gift from the Lord that upholds and sustains His children as they seek to live lives following His Word.

Mentorship between believers doesn't need to be an organized event. Rather, it should be an organic outflow of our relationship with Jesus Christ. As we grow in wisdom and deepen our faith in the Lord with prayer, Bible study, and spiritual discipline, we nurture characteristics that lend themselves to being people of godly character and mentors who nurture the budding faith of young believers. Attributes like patience, humility, and hopefulness are not unique to mentorship. Still, they are key aspects of the Christian life at every stage.

In this way, finding a mentor should not be a daunting task. It ought to flow from the biblical directive that elders guide younger ones in the ways of the Lord (Titus 2:2-6). A mentor may be someone we seek deliberately to encourage us during a difficult period or to bring clarity where there is confusion. Mentors find us in the regular communing of believers in fellowship,

prayer, and study of the Scriptures. With this in mind, believers ought to strive to become more Christlike every day, so if the Lord sees fit, we are prepared to be used to glorify Him in the role He has chosen.

Reflecting on this Old Testament story reveals my failings as a mentor and mentee. A lack of humility leads me to resist the guidance of more mature Christians, who, in their wisdom and experience, warn me of stumbling blocks I am apt to encounter. My impatience with others and a reluctance to extend grace indicate a spiritual immaturity that I need the Lord's grace and patience to rectify. The absence of these virtues inhibits my capacity in a mentoring relationship and my growth as a Christian in my personal relationship with the Lord. Recognizing these shortcomings is the first step toward improvement.

By striving to embody the principles outlined in Scripture for a mentoring relationship, my prayer is that I may grow into a believer the Lord sees fit to serve Him as an effective mentor or a receptive mentee, thereby deepening my faith in Him and guiding others to a deeper, richer relationship with the greatest mentor and exemplar — Jesus Christ.

Rhianna McGregor Hajzer is a Christian by grace, blind by design, and a writer by passion. She writes from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Home-Grown Mentoring

by Ray McAllister



The simplest form of mentoring occurs in the home or similar environments. I'm not necessarily referring to relatives mentoring each other, though that is an evident and easy-to-consider possibility. We hardly realize we're part of it, but this type of mentoring changes lives in the most significant ways.

There are many ways this type of mentoring can take place. Let us first explore some verses in Genesis 24. Here, Abraham sends his head servant to find his son, Isaac, a wife. "I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac" (Genesis 24:3-4, NKJV).

The unnamed servant embarks on his mission. One possibility is he is Eliezer of Damascus, the default heir of Abraham's household if Isaac hadn't been born (Genesis 15:2). If Eliezer were still alive in Genesis 24, he would have served Abraham for at least 50 years (Genesis 16:16; 25:20). Whatever the identity of this servant, he served under Abraham long enough to be a household elder and trusted with this assignment (Genesis 24:2).

Here, an essential factor is illustrated: The best mentoring happens when there is a lot of contact between mentor and mentee. The

person mentored can learn a great deal by being around the mentor, even if the mentor isn't always intentionally teaching skills.

Let's see what the servant learned in this prayer: "Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' — let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master" (Genesis 24:13-14).

This looks like a request for a sign concerning which woman God would choose for Isaac, but there's more going on here. Abraham was a hospitable host. In Genesis 18, Abraham received supernatural visitors. Before Abraham would have known who they were, he invited them to stay and receive his care. He and his wife hurriedly prepared food for them. In Genesis 19, Abraham's nephew Lot also showed hospitality to supernatural strangers who visited Sodom.

Let's consider Genesis 24 in this context. Abraham's servant lived around Abraham long enough, receiving mentorship to know the importance Abraham placed on hospitality. Abraham wanted his son to have a wife who was eager to show hospitality. The servant sought a woman who would go out of her way

to care for his needs. He searched for someone who would do more than what was asked and believed so strongly in hospitality to serve a total stranger. Thus, he planned to ask a woman for a drink from the well. If she was the type to jump at the opportunity and volunteer to draw water for his camels, she'd be suitable for Isaac.

Genesis 24:20 says Rachel quickly drew water for his 10 camels. It doesn't take a biologist to realize that desert-worthy animals, like the camel, who can go long distances without drinking water, would need a substantial amount of water to continue a journey.

Abraham's character traits and ideals were passed on to his servant. However, Genesis 24 doesn't suggest Abraham gave a hospitality test to the servant. Through likely guidance by the Holy Spirit, the servant thought of this himself. The servant was entrusted with this task by someone who believed it would be carried out successfully. At the end of the chapter, the servant returns with the young, beautiful, and hospitable Rachel.

SOWING SEEDS OF INDEPENDENCE

I received this kind of mentoring from my parents. My mother reinforced the importance of learning to be independent, however little eyesight I had. She also saw to my spiritual upbringing. Every night, she read my weekly

Bible lesson to me. When she couldn't, my father, who was much busier, recorded them on cassette tape.

Dad taught me how to program computers when I was a child. My programs were simple, but they gave me the tools I've needed in recent years. If I need something done with my computer, and there isn't an accessible option, I'll write the code myself. Without saying so, he made me more self-sufficient.

I've also been a home-grown mentor. When Sally and I hosted exchange students, I acted as a parent, even being called the "host father." One skill I wanted to pass on was how to interact with someone with a disability. I ensured each student had some experience leading me by having me hold their arm. I showed them what braille was like and let them observe my independence at home. By showing them how to cook some favorite recipes, they saw that blindness does not have to be the end of the world.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fact that ideas can be softly passed through mentoring can be a two-edged sword. Abraham's son, Isaac, picked up many traits of his father — some good, some bad. Concerning the bad, in Genesis 12 and 20, Abraham got into trouble by saying his wife was his sister. In Genesis 26, Isaac got into trouble for the same action.

Concerning the good, Isaac learned about the power of prayer through Abraham, his servant, or both. There is no record of Abraham's praying for his wife, Sarah, to have a baby. Abraham waited at least 25 years for God to fulfill this promise (Genesis 12:4; 21:5). Genesis 25:21 says Isaac prayed for his wife because she was barren, and she conceived, which was 20 years after he married her. Thus, Isaac got the miracle at least five years before Abraham did, and mentoring might have played a part.

My invitation here is to make the best of mentoring relationships. We can identify our skills by considering how our parents taught us. It is also essential to take an inventory of what we've picked up from them in case there are traits we wish to change. This can take effort, as we may not be aware of those traits or recognize the need for change.

When mentoring people, we must remember the power we have. We must encourage our mentees to follow the best path possible and to love God. It is also good to remind the people we mentor that we are not perfect. They will be responsible for continuing the journey independently, growing beyond our guidance. In so doing, we can all work together to more perfectly reflect the image of God.

Ray McAllister is a frequent contributor to Light magazine from Berrien Center, Michigan.

MENTORING YOUNGER GENERATIONS

by Tammy Darling



Today's youth experience incredible freedom — perhaps more than any other generation. This freedom is a blessing and a burden. Suddenly, these many choices can be overwhelming, tempting, and idolistic,

as the pressure to “fit in” is intense. Whether they realize it, young people need help sorting through life’s circumstances.

IF NOT YOU, WHO?

The Lord asked me this question, stopping me in my tracks. I have no problem praying for the younger generations; with four daughters, it’s something I’ve done for many years. However, being proactive about mentoring others my children’s age and younger was another story.

Oh, I had many reasons not to mentor: I didn’t have time with all my family responsibilities, I didn’t know anything about mentoring, and I’m an introvert. On and on I went with myself and, essentially, the Lord. Trying to convince myself I couldn’t mentor, I told the Lord, “No, thanks.”

Moses also tried making excuses when the Lord wanted His people set free. Moses’ first excuse was he was not influential (Exodus 3:11-12). To this, God replied that He would be with Moses. Moses didn’t have to “be somebody” because God would enable him to do what was necessary.

Moses’ second excuse: He did not have an answer concerning whose name he was to use to demand the Israelites’ freedom. To this, God told Moses he would act in the name of “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:13-22).

Moses' third excuse: None of Israel's leaders would believe God sent him (Exodus 4:1-9). God's response: Moses would have the ability to manifest three specific supernatural miracles.

Still not ready to obey, Moses delivered a fourth excuse, saying he wasn't a straightforward or eloquent speaker (Exodus 4:10-12). God assured Moses He would enable Moses to speak and teach him what to say.

In Moses' fifth and final excuse, he told God to please find someone else (Exodus 4:13-17). However, God allowed Aaron, Moses' brother, to accompany him. Submission was hard coming, but Moses finally obeyed.

How like us — or me. I should say, "How like me" because Moses' excuses are variations of my own.

I've learned mentoring is a way of setting people free. Without someone to come alongside us and show us the way, we're lost, wandering about without a clear path.

If you've ever had a mentor, you know what a blessing that is. I had a mentor for a season who taught me so much about traversing the complexities of life, the specifics of the Christian walk, and how to effectively navigate the two. Without her wisdom, advice, guidance, and prayers, I don't know where I'd be today.

Young people need us. Moses hesitated for the same reasons I do; perhaps you do, too. Moses wasn't secure in his identity. He thought

the mission depended solely on him and found himself lacking. Moses didn't understand the importance of what God was asking of him; all Moses saw was a task he didn't want to do.

When I consider my excuses, I can easily see they are just that. Too busy? Everyone's busy. That's life, but people matter. Making time for others is honoring. That alone speaks loudly to a generation that often feels no one cares — like they're just taking up space. Making time in your busy schedule to truly be with another person demonstrates Christ-like character in a way that younger people need. They need to know they're not alone and that someone cares.

My excuse of not knowing anything about mentoring is as lame as Moses' excuse of not knowing in whose name he was being sent. And hey, this whole edition is about mentoring, so help is available for us all. And, of course, there's no more excellent guide than the Holy Spirit.

Mentoring doesn't have to follow a step-by-step formula. Once the basics of who, when, and where are established, the rest can be flexible. However, reliance upon God each step of the way is crucial.

My excuse that I'm an introvert ranks right up there with Moses' excuse about his lack of eloquent speech. I attended speech classes in elementary school to address stuttering and other speech issues. While being taunted is no fun, it's also no excuse for not reaching out and engaging with others.

Zig Ziglar described mentoring this way: "True joy comes when you inspire, encourage, and guide someone else on a path that benefits him or her." We have the God-given privilege of coming alongside others, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, to "inspire, encourage, and guide," among other things.

We may believe we have nothing to offer, but think of all our experiences, life lessons we've learned, and the support, friendship, encouragement, and love we can extend to others who aren't as far along as we are.

We have the potential to reach countless numbers of young people. One way or another, we affect future generations. Will it be for the better? Will we reach out and walk alongside young people?

The apostle Paul mentored young Timothy on some of his missionary travels. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote this of Timothy: "For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17, NIV).

Paul's mentorship was a lifestyle, not a three-step program. Timothy learned by observing, listening, and doing life with Paul daily for a season. Mentoring can result in lifelong friendships, but mentoring is only for a season. Then, that person should begin

mentoring another.

This mentoring business isn't as complicated as we may think. It's assisting (not fixing), encouraging (not demanding), guiding (not telling). It's helping others learn to grow in their walk with Christ. It's encouraging them to utilize their God-given gifts and talents for the sake of the Kingdom. We call out the godly person they are because they may not recognize it in themselves. It's being there for them through good times and bad.

One of the greatest gifts we can give the younger generations is to communicate their worth and convey how God uniquely gifted them for a specific purpose for "such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). We want to help them discover and live from that purpose. We can help young people see beyond where they are today. Mentors are the hope-givers others so desperately need.

Younger generations want — and need — to see us genuinely living out our faith daily, just like Timothy with Paul. This means we must be willing to allow young people into our lives, homes, and hearts. Are you willing?

Yes, investing our lives in the younger generations takes time and commitment. Still, there's a great return on our investment — for future generations, our world, and eternity.

Tammy Darling is a frequent contributor to Light. She writes from her home in rural Pennsylvania.

CRS Member Library!



Christian Record Services offers more than 1,600 free books and resources to its members through the Naomi Chapman Turner Library for the Blind.

Visit www.ChristianRecord.org for more information.

LIGHT

CHRISTIAN RECORD SERVICES
PO Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506

SEPT/OCT 2024

Free Matter for
the Blind and
Physically
Handicapped

