

**February 11, 2018**

## **A Disciplined Faith**

### **James 3:1-12**

When I visit family in Homewood, Alabama, on Sunday mornings I can be found at Trinity United Methodist Church, where I grew up. Each time I attend, I seek out certain adults I wish to hug, most of whom were youth counselors when I was active in the church's youth group.

During a recent trip home, my mother passed away. At her memorial service, I hugged many of these counselors—Jack, Carol, Bill, Becky, Marie, and Jade—and many more adults I knew through my parents' Sunday school class. They were there for the family. Of course, in my mind, they are family. Each of these adults was influential in developing my faith as well as my brother's faith, which sustained us both through college and into our adult years.

In today's lesson, the student book author writes, "Some experts claim that youth must connect with at least five adults within the church in order to grow a strong faith."<sup>1</sup> Children and youth don't need dedicated adults just to teach them. They also need these adults to love them and to take an interest in their lives. That love and care helps to develop their faith.

I grew up with youth counselors dedicated to a ministry with teenagers. None of my counselors had children my age. They felt called to the ministry, even before and after their children were teenagers. The fact that I still seek them out and the fact that they came to my mother's service illustrate the influence these adults had on my life and faith development. May all God's beloved children know that kind of love and devotion.

1. If you were active in a church as a child or youth, what are your memories of the adults in your church? How did those adults influence your life and faith development? If you wrote one of those adults a letter, what would you say to him or her?
2. How can adults who are not teachers influence the youth in your church? Why is it crucial for youth to be surrounded by many adults of faith during the teenage development years?
3. How does your church recruit teachers and volunteers for the youth ministry? How can your small group support your church's youth ministry?

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<sup>1</sup>From *Adult Bible Studies*, Winter 2017-2018, by Chuck Aaron (Cokesbury, 2017); page 80.