



Investing in the Lives of Young Men

by Gary Horton, Church Health Strategist, Southwest Region

About a year and a half ago, Wendell Horton, pastor of Sky View Missionary Baptist Church in Fancy Gap, developed a burden to reach and train young men, helping them grow in their faith. As he considered such a ministry, the Lord challenged him and affirmed this vision through Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it” (KJV).

Pastor Wendell visited the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) leader at the local middle school and shared his heart. The leader asked him to speak at an FCA lock-in, where Pastor Wendell challenged the young men to develop their faith and grow closer to the Lord. He shared how he wanted to work with those committed to growing in their relationship with Christ and train them to be sold-out servants of God. Those willing to spend time in God’s Word and in other Christian materials to help them grow in their faith were asked to sign up. The group would meet regularly to build relationships with each other and with the Lord. Thirteen young men committed to be a part of this new group; six of them were truly sold out.

Pastor Wendell explained to the teenagers that he was not trying to take them away from their home churches. He wrote a letter to each young man’s pastor

telling him of his vision and purpose. God opened the door, and all were willing to support his efforts.

The mentoring group began with team-building exercises to foster close relationships. They then began reading and discussing numerous books, such as *Do Hard Things* by Alex and Brett Harris, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey, *One Thing You Can’t Do in Heaven* by Mark Cahill, and *Every Young Man’s Battle* by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker. Pastor Wendell also trained them to share their faith using the *FAITH* evangelism method.

When he signed up to join, Dustin Richardson was shy and not the type to relish speaking in front of a group. After 18 months of being mentored and participating in the group, Dustin gave his testimony to the Sky View congregation. “The group,” shares Dustin, “has helped me develop my confidence to speak in front of a large group. I was only a little bit nervous.”

Because of Pastor Wendell’s willingness to spend time with young men like Dustin, their lives have been changed, and the changes in their lives have produced changes in others. Dustin’s father, grandfather, and aunt have since been baptized, and two young men from the group have announced their calling into the ministry. Are you willing to invest in the lives of young people in your church and community?



RESOURCE

■ **Website:** www.svmbc.com

■ **SBCV Contact:**
Call 888-234-7716 for details from your region’s missionary.

■ **Consider:**
Are you willing to invest in the lives of young people?

■ **An Observation:**
Pastor Wendell found that 9th graders seemed to be the best fit for this mentoring program—not yet driving; therefore, having fewer commitments than driving teenagers.

■ **Recommended Reads:**
Do Hard Things by Alex and Brett Harris
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens by Sean Covey
One Thing You Can’t Do in Heaven by Mark Cahill
Every Young Man’s Battle by Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker