

RECRUITING & NURTURING VOLUNTEER LEADERS

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As a teenager I was invited (had my arm twisted) to lead on a Scripture Union holiday programme. As a very shy and reserved young lad this was stretching to say the least, especially when I ended up sharing the Bible talk at the last night's concert with all the parents present. One year later, I was co-leading the programme and several years after that, overseeing the holiday programmes in the region and helping to train other leaders.

What I have noticed about children and young people who are growing in their faith is that they have been given opportunities to serve. Creating space for and nurturing these young volunteers is an act of intentionally growing disciples.

1. PRAY FIRST

"Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field."

—Matthew 9:38



Pray specifically for God to raise up the right people—those with the heart, gifts, and calling to serve. Remember those first disciples that Jesus called—not all of them were an obvious choice.

2. CAST A COMPELLING VISION

People don't sign up for tasks—they sign up for purpose. When inviting volunteers, don't just say, "We need helpers." Say things like: "We're shaping lives for eternity." And share short stories or testimonies from your ministry of how that is happening. It's important to sell your overarching mission rather than just the individual tasks.

3. PERSONALISE THE INVITE

Personal invitations are far more effective than announcements. Approach people



individually and use language like: “I’ve noticed how easily you connect with young people—would you consider joining our team?” Let them know you see potential in them and that you have noticed things in them that your team would truly benefit from.

4. OFFER CLEAR ROLES AND MANAGEABLE COMMITMENTS

Many people hesitate to volunteer because they don’t know what’s expected. Provide clear role descriptions and realistic time expectations. Be flexible and offer “for a limited time only” or “one-off” projects. Assure them that they’ll be part of a supportive team and won’t be carrying the load all by themselves.

5. CELEBRATE AND AFFIRM VOLUNTEERS

Recognition fuels retention. Know their love languages. Provide feedback and share the success stories. We all love to be affirmed and know that we are making a valuable contribution. Create a culture in your team of mutual appreciation and genuine valuing of each other. Make sure your volunteers overhear you telling

others how important they are.

6. INVEST IN THEM

People stay where they grow, so, train, mentor, and provide positive community. Create a growth mindset where the team is always open to learning and improving for the sake of the mission. Look for opportunities to challenge and extend your volunteers with the appropriate support.

7. BRING THE JOY

If your ministry feels like a chore, volunteers won’t stay long. Build fun and laughter into your team culture. Volunteers are happy to do most tasks if they are having fun and really enjoy the team of people with whom they are working. One of the most common reasons volunteers stick around is because of the relational connections they form.

8. MODEL SERVANT LEADERSHIP

When leaders are visibly enthusiastic, others catch the vision. So, serve humbly alongside your team, letting your own joy and faithfulness be contagious. Remember, faith is often more caught than taught.



I encourage you to have a look around at the children and young people in your faith communities and ask yourself how they might be nurtured into leadership? What opportunities or pathways already exist, or need to be created? 

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV