



NC BAPTISTS

**STUDENT MINISTRY
VOLUNTEER LEADER
RESOURCES**

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Clarity Is Kind

Part one in a three-step process for you to grow in your ability to lead leaders.

1. **Clarity is kind**
2. **Walk alongside**
3. **Inspect what you expect**

As the student ministry leader, you need to decide what your expectations are for leaders under your supervision — whether that be student disciple-makers, small group leaders or other volunteer leaders who look to you for direction.

During each leader’s onboarding and interview process, you should communicate what is expected of them. As the leader, it is your job to set them up to succeed. Clear communication is key. When volunteer leaders fail in their role, we should look to ourselves first, identifying where we failed in the communication and development process.

Creating clarity

In the context of your ministry, create a job description for your volunteer leaders. You can create this job description using these three categories.

1. **Qualifications:** (growing relationship with Jesus, church member, etc.)
2. **Commitment:** (75% program attendance, review small group guide before small group, build relationships with students outside programs, etc.)
3. **Dreams:** (go on a mission trip with your students, attend camp, serve outside the church together, etc.)

Leaders are required to meet your qualifications and commitments, while dreams are aspirations but not requirements.

High bar vs. low bar

You do not want to set an unrealistic expectation of what it takes to be a volunteer. People should be able to love their family, work a job, have personal time and still lead well. Good leaders do not push people to burn out. Good leaders always care about the person more than the ministry.

You don’t want students to be overly dependent on your leaders (“If my leader is not going, neither am I”). Lowering the bar for leadership does more harm than help. Everyone is tempted to lower the bar because of the need for more volunteers.

High-capacity leaders are looking to make a difference, not fill a spot. When you tell them, “This is easy; anybody can do it,” high-capacity leaders run. If your volunteer culture is focused on getting people to volunteer so you can meet ratios or fill spots, you will not retain high-capacity leaders. These leaders value their time and their skills, and they need to know that they are making an impact by giving themselves to your ministry. High-capacity leaders desire to be developed and challenged.

Leaders of leaders

- Poor leaders’ expectations require little faith or sacrifice. Poor leaders do not communicate with their volunteer leaders about how they can succeed.
- Good leaders create expectations that are clear, challenging and sustainable.

Walk Alongside

Part two in a three-step process for you to grow in your ability to lead leaders.

1. **Clarity is kind**
2. **Walk alongside**
3. **Inspect what you expect**

Just because you have communicated a role — including qualifications, commitments and dreams — to a volunteer leader does not mean your job is done as a leader. Often, student ministry leaders onboard a new volunteer and simply turn them loose.

As leaders, we must walk alongside our volunteers to help them become all God has called them to be. Here is a five-step process to help you in this task.

STEP ONE: TELL THEM WHY

- Cast vision for why they should spend their time discipling the next generation. There are many different ways to serve in the church — It's your job to tell them why reaching the next generation is the most impactful.

STEP TWO: SHOW THEM HOW

- Before sending them to teach a Bible Study or lead a small group, show them how. Teaching them how includes equipping them with the right resources, training them how to teach and answering their questions.

STEP THREE: MODEL IT BEFORE THEM

- Let them watch you teach. Let them see how you prepare. Is there another key leader already in your ministry who could model it before them?

STEP FOUR: DO IT WITH THEM

- Leaders need to have shared experiences with feedback for complete understanding.

STEP FIVE: SPUR THEM ON

- After walking through the previous steps, encourage and send them on mission.

Pick a leader and start them on step one this week.

Environments

People grow best in a grace-filled environment where failure is not fatal. Failure opens up doors for learning and growth. Are you creating an environment where volunteer leaders feel supported, challenged to try new things and receive grace upon failure?

Most leaders focus on creating the best strategy. The best leaders focus on empowering the right leaders. Your potential is not determined by what you do — your potential is determined by the leaders you empower.

A healthy student ministry sustains an environment where there are leaders at each of the five steps. Walking alongside volunteer leaders in their development process is a long process. Patience is key. Crock-Pot mac and cheese is always better than microwaved Easy Mac.

Inspect What You Expect



Part three in a three-step process for you to grow in your ability to lead leaders.

1. **Clarity is kind**
2. **Walk alongside**
3. **Inspect what you expect**

How often have you expected someone to do something but failed to come behind them and inspect it? Your job as a leader does not stop at empowering someone to accomplish a goal. After you empower them, you must continually come around and inspect what you expect from them.

We are all human. People can drop the ball. As the leader of the ministry, you cannot just assume everything you say will get done with the level of excellence you expect.

Healthy leaders lead healthy ministries

People lead out of the overflow of who they are. A leader's spiritual walk is the most important aspect of their leadership. Are we leading our leaders in the way we expect them to lead their students? Leaders need to experience good leadership to be a good leader.

The best way to hold leaders accountable is to care for their health and walk with Jesus. How does your time spent each week reflect your thoughts on the importance of your leaders' spiritual walk?

1. Relationship precedes accountability

Every important thing in life moves at the speed of relationships. To truly care for someone spiritually, you must know them. People must trust you deeply before they will let you speak into your life.

2. Investments Multiply

Compound interest is a beautiful thing. If you were to gain 10% annual interest on \$100, the total amount earned at the end of the year would be \$110: the initial \$100, plus \$10 of interest. After two years, you'd have \$121 because your interest would have compounded with your original \$100. After 20 years, you'd have \$672, while only ever investing \$100.

Investments in people work the same way. When you invest in someone they then go and invest in someone else, compounding your investment.

Tracking

Are you recruiting enough volunteers to focus on tasks so your disciplers can focus on discipling students? Are you keeping track of which students are being disciplined by each leader? Do your leaders have a way of communicating what is going on in their students' lives with you? Google Forms, large charts and text threads are all simple ways to do this.

You replicate what you celebrate

Are you celebrating leaders who are doing a good job? When people are celebrated, they continue to repeat that behavior. Others tend to pick up behaviors that are acknowledged and celebrated by the leader.

Onboarding Process



Once someone has expressed interest in being a volunteer leader in your student ministry, what process do you take them through? Here is an example of an onboarding process:

1. Application & background check

The substantive and formal nature of this application is an intentional way to communicate the seriousness of serving in student ministry. It also provides documented due diligence. The application should at the minimum include: one's personal testimony, one's reason for serving, references and a background check. You will know what questions best fit your context.

2. Interview

During the interview you want to follow up on the information you received from the application. The interview will help you best set up this volunteer to succeed. Like all interviews, don't just ask them questions. This is a time for you to answer questions from the volunteer. Use this interview as an opportunity to create clarity and talk about the expectations you have for a volunteer.

3. Follow-up on references & background check

Don't just submit the background check, but also make sure it passes. Call their references and hear what they have to say about the applicant.

4. Shadowing

For the next month, have your volunteer shadow a current leader during your program. It is crucial that you have them shadow one of your best leaders. Make sure your leader being shadowed knows it is their responsibility to show the potential leader the ropes.

5. Training content

Have your leaders complete content-based training. These trainings can be videos or readings. You can include good resources made by other people, but only you will be able to train to your context. Here is the content worth covering:

- Vision of Student Ministry
- Communication and Engagement with Students and Families
- Curriculum Preparation and Best Practices
- Dealing with Difficult Students/Situations
- Church's Safety Policy & Reporting Guidelines

6. Halfway check-in

You should schedule a 1-2 minute phone call to follow up with the candidate. The candidate should have questions from shadowing or reviewing the training. It is an opportunity for informal coaching based on what you have observed during the first 4 weeks of the shadow.

7. Placement

If student ministry is not a good fit, help them find another avenue in the church to use their gifts. If both parties agree, it is a good fit.

Fully welcome the volunteer to the team. You can do so by recognizing them in your leader huddle, acknowledging them in your program or giving them their official student ministry t-shirt and name tag. It is important that the adults clearly recognize they are shifting from being a shadow to a leader. By this point, you should know exactly which students they will lead. No one is ever truly ready; being willing is more important.

Here is an [Onboarding Tracker](#) you can use to keep track of all your leaders.

Recruitment



Recruiting runs college football. If you are not able to recruit as a head coach, you will not last long. The University of Georgia spends 4.5 million dollars annually just on football recruiting. They spend 4.5 million dollars to land commitments from 20-25 high school football players.

Culture recruits, not money. Approaches that only focus on recruiting leaders will never create culture. Creating and sustaining a culture is going to retain, develop and recruit volunteers throughout the year.

Here are a few questions to think about when it comes to volunteer recruiting:

- Do you have ample opportunities as the ministry leader to meet new people in your church?
- Do your existing leaders recruit within their spheres of influence at the church?
- Does your website clearly articulate the next steps for someone wanting to get involved?
- Do your current volunteers feel the freedom to change roles within the ministry to steward their personal giftings?

What should I do? You need a time-sensitive goal with a metric count. Here are some examples:

- “I will identify two church members a month as potential leaders in student ministry.”
- “I will ask each of my current leaders to personally introduce me to one person in our church they believe would be a great student ministry leader”
- “I will check in with one of my current leaders each week to ensure they are feeling fulfilled with the way they are currently using their gifts to serve.”

Volunteer Roles



Up to this point in the training series, we've been focused mainly on those serving in primary discipleship roles. For your church, this might be a small group leader or Sunday school teacher. The primary role of these leaders is to build a relationship with the students, to reach those who are lost and to disciple those who are saved.

In this training, we'll shift our attention to other roles that adult leaders can serve in. By having volunteers focus on these other items, your primary small group leaders can focus more on the kids.

Here are a few examples of additional volunteer roles:

- Greeters/First time guest
- Check-in
- Emcees
- Production
- Worship
- Setup/Teardown
- Games
- Photography/Videography
- Food team

Additional optional opportunities outside of programming::

- Prayer team
- Social media
- Social events
- Service projects
- Retreats and camps
- Local school campus ministry

[Take a look at Scott's Hill Student Ministry Support Roles](#)

Here are a few questions to ask volunteers to help figure out what role is best for them:

- 1. What could you do for hours on end and not get bored?**
- 2. Where do your passions meet opportunities?**
- 3. When you are daydreaming, what are you thinking about?**

Communication

Most of the problems we face in ministry are due to a lack of communication.

As leaders, we need to ensure that clear communication happens across the board, especially as we work to communicate to our volunteer leaders.

Below are some recommendations in developing healthy communication habits and patterns. Our goal here is to ensure everyone on the team is operating effectively and under the same vision. **Remember: The best communication outlet is the one your people read.** Adjust your communication practices based on the needs and preferences of your volunteer leaders.

1. In-person communication

In-person communication is key. Ensure you are having regular conversations with your leaders on a regular basis.

Consider scheduling regular meetings or phone calls with volunteer leaders.

2. Digital communication

Email: Don't overdo. Use as a way to communicate key information in a concise manner.

- Keep most important information toward the top.
- Keep text simple and easy to read.
- Respect your leaders' time and recognize that leaders may not be available to respond immediately.

Text: Similar to email, keep text communication brief and to the point. Consider using messaging apps (Slack, GroupMe) as a way to streamline communication.

- Avoid sending long paragraphs or multiple texts for a single message.
- Leaders may be more likely to respond promptly to text rather than email. Not every message is urgent, however — don't text unnecessarily.
- Avoid using this medium for sensitive or complex issues. Face-to-face is ideal here.

Retain



Culture that retains

Creating team culture goes beyond serving at the actual service. It's about creating connections and building community among volunteers. When volunteers feel connected, they're more committed.

How?

1. Connect weekly

Connect Weekly is a weekly one-on-one. You don't have to do this with everyone every week, but with everyone over time.

Consider meeting with a different set of small group leaders after each Sunday night so that each small group leader gets a 15-minute meeting. You could set up a calendly and have leaders sign up for a time to meet you for lunch or coffee. Pick one meal each week and reserve it to eat with your leaders.

This time is designed to develop leaders who lead leaders. Multiply yourself in your best leaders. Train them in the processes we learned earlier and empower them.

2. Gather quarterly

Gathering should be a fun thing. This could be as simple as going to Bojangles after normal programming on the last Wednesday/Sunday of the month. Some leaders choose to take turns cooking dinner after Sunday night programming and invite the other leaders to join them. People love to recruit others to do things they find community in. If you build community among your leaders, not only will they stick around, but they will also invite other people in.

3. Train bi-annually

Intentionally train them on how to be successful disciplers. You can do this yourself, but also feel free to bring someone in to assist. I prefer a mixture of in-person training and making online resources available for them to continue to learn and grow. [Here is a list of youth ministry conferences](#) designed just for leaders. (Disclaimer: This list does not imply an endorsement of every conference or ministry; read through and choose conferences at your own discretion.)

Assessment



Are your leaders serving in the right roles?

Sometimes this is obvious. You have an introvert greeting at the drop-off area or you have your most skilled emcee writing emails. Sometimes, you can easily recognize the need to switch roles.

Most of the time, it is not that easy. Most of our volunteers are not experienced and do not naturally know how to put themselves in the best place to serve. Here are a few tools that you could use to help maximize your volunteer's strengths and giftings.

Volunteer Accelerator by YM360- This is a rather expensive option, but the Volunteer Accelerator allows you to personalize your volunteer opportunities, send surveys to learn the strengths of your volunteers and maintain a database of their information.

Working Genius- This is the most helpful tool to increase team fulfillment and productivity. The Working Genius assessment is 20% personality and 80% productivity. People who understand their genius show up to work happier, are more effective and play well with others.

Why should you give your volunteer team this assessment?

- You will understand why they have been successful or unsuccessful in past assignments and roles.
- You will clarify which types of work give joy and energy and which types are draining and difficult for each individual.
- You will avoid making unfair and inaccurate judgments about one another's motivation.
- You will alleviate guilt about struggles people have with certain types of work and tasks.

Accountability

Introduce a **Red** – **Yellow** – **Green** light system as a way for leaders to evaluate their performance. This system provides clarity on whether the leader is meeting expectations or needs to make changes.

If the leader is doing well and seems to know their role, you give them a **“green light.”** If a leader is green, you can encourage them and spur them on. On the other hand, if the leader is doing okay but you don't know if they are maximizing their potential and are fully aligned with your vision, you give them a **“yellow light.”** You give them a **“red light”** when what you are saying is not translating into what they are doing.

When you meet with the leader, you have the opportunity to explain why they are receiving their color. Ask them, “Am I right in this?” Give them a chance to explain. You can also give them the opportunity to give themselves a light.

What Categories Do You Address?

Ultimately, that is up to you to decide as a leader. What are the things you are expecting from your volunteers? Ministry leader Justin Knowles evaluates his leaders on these four things:

1. **Faith conversation**
2. **Follow-up**
3. **Family connection**
4. **Fellowship**

If your leaders are leading their small groups well in these four areas, your student ministry will be in a healthy place. Encourage your leaders to use these four categories to measure their impact. Clarity is kind, and this clarifies expectations. The **Red** – **Yellow** – **Green** system enables you to hold your leaders accountable.

Pastoral conversations

Remember, you are not using this system as a supervisor or school teacher. You are using it pastorally. This system will foster pastoral conversations between you and your volunteers. If you do this rightly, it will create immense shepherding opportunities for you. When you do this with compassion, you can gain great trust with your leaders. It's a collaborative effort where leaders receive guidance so they can develop.

Cancel an Event



Often, our families, our supervisor, and even we ourselves judge our work by the size of the events we produce. We can be guilty of equating success with the size of the event. That's because events give us instant gratification and the tangible fruit of our hard work — we can see the return on our investment quickly.

Our ultimate goal, however, is to create disciple-making disciples. All student ministry leaders would agree that they desire to help shape young people into lifelong disciples of Christ. Events draw attention but do not always produce lifelong followers of Jesus.

Here's a suggestion for next year: Cancel a big event. You may have an event on your calendar that is designed to reach lost students, but only church students attend. You may have an event on your calendar that is supposed to be evangelistic but is not.

Cancel it and replace it with this: Give all of your volunteer leaders a gift card/stipend to spend that day relationally discipling one of their students. Don't publicly advertise this on your website or email communication. Just let your volunteer leaders know. Give them — and yourself — the time this event would have taken out of your schedules for relational discipleship. Put as much effort into making sure all of your leaders meet with students as you would have to execute an event.

People will view this as a step backward, but it's not. It's a leap forward in our approach to discipleship. You are focusing on what you want to be true of all of your students: making disciples who make disciples.

Review

Student ministry leader Michael Boyles has made this great sheet as a reminder to volunteers.

Before Service

- Check email during the week.
- Take 15-30 minutes during the week to look over the curriculum and prepare for small group.
- Arrive by 8:30 a.m. for the leaders' meeting.
- Wear your leader name tag.
- Be a master greeter. Be available for conversations and look out for new students, loners, new parents, etc.
- Use high fives, handshakes, smiles and eye contact with a few good questions.
- Help create a warm and inviting atmosphere for all students and parents.
- **Remember!** The most important person here is always a middle school student.

During the Service

- Be a thermostat (set the temperature and culture in the room).
- Sit with a student on your right and left (preferably with your small group).
- Participate in games, clapping and videos; learn names; invite students to sit with you; etc.

During the Message

- Help students follow the "House Rules."
 - 1. No distractions**
 - 2. Respect others**
 - 3. Have fun**
- Take notes and model appropriate behavior for students.
- Embrace the squiggle!
- You could be a student's only connection to Jesus or a caring adult all week.
- Put yourself in their shoes!

In Small Groups

- Learn the names of the students in your group. We want you to be known by them.
- Start with fun every week. The universal language for students is fun!
- Try to affirm your students every week.
- Allow the curriculum to guide and aid your small group, but don't feel obligated to stick to it 100%.
- Discipleship happens at the speed of relationships!
- **Remember!** Small groups are the most important thing we do!
- Find out if you have first-time guests. If so, get the student's name and address and fill out a FTG card for the student. We will mail it out that week.

After the Service

- Hang out with your group until they all leave. This is a great time to build deeper relationships.
- Keep an eye out for students who may need to talk further, who seem out of their element or who need a little extra love.

Discipline

- Always err on the side of grace.
- Never yell or be rude. Call them to the expectations (House Rules).
- You have the authority and responsibility to confront students who are a distraction.
- Adult Leaders: Respect leads to influence, and influence leads to respect.