



NOT ON OUR WATCH

Church Training Module #3

Call to Community

When I first started in full-time ministry, I remember thinking there are so many things that no one told me. I can organize with the best of them, but dealing with the people side of things was my challenge. I remember thinking at one point, "Why doesn't anyone want to volunteer in the Kids Ministry? It is so fun, and they have plenty of time." I know you are laughing at me right now, but this is truly what I thought. Then, my all too wise husband reminded me that I work with people. These are people who come from all different walks of life, who are dealing with many different things, and who are needing someone to come alongside them as they volunteer in kids ministry. Let me say this; my husband is right most of the time. I was missing the personal aspect of volunteer ministry. I needed to make people feel welcomed, needed, and encouraged. Kids ministry volunteers make up a community. A community that needs a leader to love and care for them. When we start looking at people who serve in our ministry as humans created in the image of God, things begin to change. Kids Ministry leaders do not work for us; we are called to minister to them just as much as we are the kids in our ministry. People who work in kids ministry are my favorite people, so why not start treating them like a community of people who you love and care for dearly. This mindset will change your ministry.

A Look into Our Community

Something that we have found successful in creating this community is through weekly meetings. We build this meeting into our Wednesday night schedule, so it does not produce something else the volunteers have to attend. In this meeting, I get to talk with each of them, and get to know them in a way I would not usually get to know them. This time together is my favorite time to ask them how their small groups are going. I can ask questions, and we can discuss the best way to handle a situation. I also love this time because they can hear what other small group leaders are doing, and they can bounce ideas off of each other. We create a gathering where they can let out their frustrations, knowing it is a safe place. We get to laugh together, tell funny stories, and we get to be people, not just kids ministry workers. They get to be heard, loved, and cared for deeply.

Prayer Changes Things

One of the most amazing things about this meeting is that we get to pray together. Prayer has been a powerful tool within our kids ministry. We get to share prayer requests, and we get to be

open with each other. When we first started this prayer meeting, it was such a meaningful time. We got to pray for specific things in the lives of those who we work with each week, and that brought us closer to each other. We prayed for so many things and saw God answer many of our requests. Prayer brings people together and changes them, and that is what we have experienced in our time together. I have seen many of our volunteers open up and share intimate details of their lives during this prayer time. The Lord has used this time to create a sense of safeness and security for our workers. We have learned to trust one another and feel completely bound together by this special prayer time. It brings so much joy and warmth to my heart as a minister to see our volunteers join hands and pray together as one body of believers. It has easily become my favorite time of our busy Wednesday night schedule.

Time for sharing

I specifically ask them how their time with their children is going. I ask them for feedback on things that are working and things that might not be going very well. I did not want to continue doing certain things if all my volunteers were struggling with it. One year my volunteers were struggling with the schedule, and it was in this meeting that we were able to change it and get things working better for everyone. I want them to enjoy serving in kids ministry. I want them to feel like I am in their corner and that they can come to me when they are having a problem. Our time together created an open opportunity for volunteers to share their concerns and struggles. Volunteers would also share things they were doing in their classrooms that were working for them. It allowed us to bounce ideas off of each other and share something that might help someone who was struggling. One year we had a teacher who was struggling with a difficult child, and it was in our gathering that we were able to talk through it to help this teacher out. A few years later, we had another teacher who was struggling with the same child, and it was in this meeting that the teachers got together and shared their secrets for how to engage this child in a better way. These were some of our most productive meetings because we walked away with a better understanding of each other. I get to remind them of their calling as a Kids Ministry leader. We refocus our vision, address any issues that have come up, and remind them of the goal of children's discipleship. Constantly reminding them that what they do matters will excite them in the work they have volunteered to do.

Kids Ministry is ALL about Volunteers

If I have said it once I have said it more times than I can count, Kids Ministry is impossible without volunteers. Therefore, those volunteers should be the best-trained people in the church. They also should be the most cared for people in the church. They are teaching the next generation the glorious deeds of the Lord; therefore, what they do matters. We cannot neglect our ministry to them as well as the children we are teaching. Even though they are serving in the church, they all bring struggles and hurts with them as they serve. We must create a sense of community and openness among our people. We must make them feel loved and appreciated. Kids ministry volunteers sacrifice their time and efforts to ensure that our children hear and know about our Savior. They create special bonds with the kids, some for a lifetime. Without these volunteers, our kids ministry would not be where it is today. As their leader, I make a conscious effort to remind them that their ministry to our children is invaluable.

Ideas to Create Community and Make Your Volunteers Feel Special

- Monthly small gifts to show appreciation
- Handwritten notes
- Texts to check in and see how they are doing
- Showing up for them when they need it
- Remembering things about them and their family
- Snacks brought to the meeting you have with them weekly
- Celebrating things in their life
- Taking a break from the schedule once in a while to have fun!

Written by Erin Woodfin