

HAVE YOU BEEN ASKED TO LEAD YOUR YOUTH  
GROUP, BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

# VOLUNTEER

A VOLUNTEER'S GUIDE TO

# YOUTH

LEADING A YOUTH MINISTRY LIKE A PRO

# MINISTER

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BETHEL GROVE



Bethel Grove Publications



*Volunteer Youth Minister: A Volunteer's Guide to Leading a Youth Ministry Like a Pro (Sample)*

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# Introduction

*I don't know how to lead a youth group*, I thought to myself. I was almost 26 years old and only had a few years of experience as a youth ministry volunteer. Yet the youth group had come to a crossroads when the elder and his wife who had been leading the youth group were moving away, leaving myself and a deacon as the only adult leaders left. Given the busy nature of the deacon's schedule, the church leadership thought it was best to ask me to help him as co-leader of the youth group. At the time, leading a youth group was not on my radar and the idea was rather overwhelming at first. But since I was raised as a pastor's kid, I naturally knew a lot of aspects of organizing a ministry. This made it much easier for me to jump into the organizational side of youth ministry. But at the end of the day, I had to do a lot of learning on the job about how to essentially do the work of a youth minister.

Unfortunately, too many small churches are unable to hire youth ministers and other auxiliary staff members. While I understand the reasons and am sympathetic to their situation, this often results in the programming for the youth of the church being less of a priority. With few options available, these churches usually end up asking a volunteer or a volunteer couple to lead the youth group. However, these volunteers usually don't have any training or vocational experience on how to do the job of a youth minister, not to mention doing it without pay on top of their regular jobs. This creates what I call "volunteer youth ministers," volunteers who are in charge of a youth ministry. In many cases, these volunteers get overwhelmed with trying to keep weekly programming afloat, let alone any special programming like youth events. It also tends to result in many of these volunteers getting burned out in a short amount of time, and leaving the youth group high and dry when they have to suddenly step down. Then, the church ends up needing to ask another volunteer to lead the youth group to pick up the pieces. This results in a cycle that is hard to break and doesn't serve the students of these churches well enough to help them grow spiritually.

If you are reading this resource, I imagine that you are probably in a similar situation. You have probably been asked to lead a youth group, either by yourself or with your spouse, and the church leadership has confidence that you are the best choice. However, you don't have a youth ministry degree or any vocational experience doing youth ministry. At best, you may have a few years of experience as a volunteer. You may be feeling overwhelmed at the thought of trying to keep the youth group organized with everything else going on in your life. Maybe you are unsure how to plan for youth group lessons or special events. Maybe you are nervous about choosing games or making announcements. Or maybe you are coming into the ministry on the heels of another volunteer who struggled with leading the youth group, and you want to avoid making the same mistakes.

If this is you, I want to save you from all the frustrations I faced by walking you through the ins and outs of leading a youth ministry as a volunteer. Many of these lessons I've learned through my many experiences as a youth leader, both as a leader and a regular volunteer. Some of these lessons I've learned from several years of research and study on how to organize and lead a youth ministry well. My hope is to present these concepts in a way that anyone can understand so that you can lead

your youth group with the clarity and confidence of an experienced youth minister. I am so excited to take you on this journey.

Fellow Youth Leader,

**Bethel Grove**

# Youth Ministry Terms

Before we get started, we need to make sure we are on the same page when it comes to understanding youth ministry. So here is a list of terms that you will encounter. Some will be used in this resource, while others are simply meant to educate you in case you haven't heard them before. Even if you are familiar with these terms, you will hopefully learn something new that will help you get your feet wet in the youth ministry world.

**Youth Ministry/Student Ministry** – A ministry of a church or para-church organization that focuses on serving teenagers. For most organizations, this includes both junior high and high school students. However, it can sometimes include students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade (pre-teens)

**Young Adult/College Age Ministry** – A ministry of a church or para-church organization that focuses on serving young adults and/or college students. For most organizations, this will start after students graduate high school, but the end age will vary from 24-30 years old. In some churches, this is considered to be a type of youth ministry and may become the responsibility of the youth minister/leader.

**Youth Group** – This can refer to two things: 1) The name of regular weekly gatherings of the students who participate in the youth ministry. 2) The collective name of the students and leaders of your youth ministry, especially if you don't have a specific name for your group

**Small Group** – 1) A regular discussion group that usually assembles after the lesson or teaching. In youth ministry, these groups are usually divided by at least age if not also gender. 2) The youth ministry model that relies on meeting in assigned discussion groups after lesson time as the main source of building relationships

**Large Group** – 1) For groups that rely on small groups, “large group” or “large group time” refers to the time that the whole group is together. In youth ministry, this may include group games, worship, and/or lesson time 2) The youth ministry model that keeps everyone together for discussion time, focusing on building relationships with the whole group.

**Youth Minister/Pastor** – The person who is hired by the church or para-church organization to lead their youth ministry.

**Youth Leader** – 1) A person who is in charge of a youth ministry but is not paid by the church or para-church organization 2) A volunteer who helps with a youth ministry. For the sake of clarity, “youth leader” will be the term I will use in this resource to refer to the person in charge.

**Youth Worker/Sponsor** – A volunteer who helps with a youth ministry. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to volunteers as “youth workers” in this resource.

{More terms in *Volunteer Youth Minister*}

# Is Leading a Youth Ministry Right for You?

If you have been asked by your church's leadership to lead the youth group, chances are that you are wondering if you are the right fit for the position. If this is you, you can ask yourself this series of questions to help you figure out whether leading the youth group is the right for you:

## **Do you have a heart for students?**

At the heart of every great youth leader is a heart for working with and serving students. There are two elements I see as part of having a heart for students. The first is enjoying spending time with them. If you are an adult who enjoys and looks forward to going to youth group or youth events with your students, this might be a good sign that you have a heart for students, especially since some adults claim that spending that kind of time with students would drive them crazy.

But beyond enjoying spending time with them is the second element: a desire to see them live up to their full potential, especially spiritually. If you care about teenagers, want nothing but the best for them, and want to see them grow up to be men and women who can live up to the potential of who God made them to be, I would consider these traits to be a great sign that you have a heart for students that would serve you well in this role of youth leader. If you combine enjoying spending time with them with a desire to see them fulfill their potential, you have the foundations you need to do well in youth ministry.

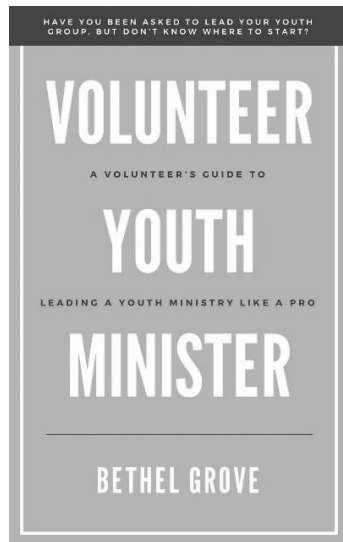
## **Do you have a decent grasp of God's Word so you can teach it?**

While having a heart for students is crucial, having the ability to teach God's Word is essential for a youth leader. However, you don't have to be a pastor or biblical scholar to get started. Instead, you simply need to have a firm grasp of the gospel message and be comfortable enough with the stories and concepts from Scripture to teach them to others (given the sufficient amount of time to prepare a lesson, of course). If you have this, as well as a willingness to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and your ability to communicate it as you go, then you will do just fine.

**[To Be Continued in *Volunteer Youth Minister*]**



**Want to learn more about leading a youth ministry as a volunteer?  
Then make sure to check out *Volunteer Youth Ministry*  
and the Starter Pack of downloadable resources.**



Learn more at <https://www.bethelgrove.com/volunteeryouthministry.html>



You can also find these and other resources to help make youth ministry simple by visiting <https://simpleyouthministry.org>