

How A Leader Can Effectively Use Follow-Up

Introduction

- **What is follow-up?** Any form of communication that takes place between you and your volunteers or students outside of the place service or classroom.
- There are various types of follow-up, including: phone calls, emails, texts, and face-to-face meetings.
- Follow-up is vital to the success of your ministry. Once when I asked my dad what were the 3 most important practices that I needed to master in order to succeed at children's ministry, he answered me in this way: *"If I had to rank the top 3 things, they would be, follow-up, follow-up, and finally....follow-up."*
- His point came across loud and clear - if I did nothing else well, I HAD to follow-up well.
- Role play: Bring up a student at random to recount their personal story of growth as a Christian. Identify times where the follow-up of a mentor was key to their growth or key to avoiding a step in the wrong direction.

A Great Biblical Example

- Acts 20 is one of the greatest examples of the benefits that can be achieved through effective follow-up on your team or students.
- When Paul is saying his goodbyes to the Ephesians, he reminds them that he had not only taught them publicly, but also "house to house."

Acts 20:20: *"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, **and from house to house,**"*

- Paul understood that some things are better taught in the context of a private, trusting relationship than in a large, public forum.
- Let's take a closer look at Paul's example in Acts 20 to see how we can become leaders who are effective at follow-up.

1. Use Follow-Up To Teach

Acts 20:20: *"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,"*

Acts 20:27: *"For I have not shunned to declare unto you **all the counsel of God.**"*

Acts 20:35: *I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

- Your best teaching moments will most likely not come in a classroom or in a team meeting - they will come during one-on-one personal conversations.
- Examples: my most effective Awana teachers usually were the result of one-on-one coaching sessions, not the joint sessions.

2. Use Follow-Up to Encourage

- New volunteers are often very insecure. They need encouragement from their leader letting them know that they're doing a good job.
- Encouraging your volunteers certainly includes how you treat them on Sundays, but it should be so much more than this. I personally prefer the written medium over all other forms of communication for sending encouragement to volunteers.
- When you write someone a card, or send them an email or text, you can take the time to phrase your thoughts in a way that has the most meaning and impact. And it's something that your volunteers can read and re-read over and over again.
- Paul often used letters to encourage his followers:

Philippians 1:6 - *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"*

1 Thessalonians 1:8 - *"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."*

- Encouraging your volunteers also includes encouraging walking with them through the ups and downs of life. Satan will try to use the difficult *seasons* to discourage them and cause them to quit.

Acts 20:18: *And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you **at all seasons,***

- Follow-up can be exhausting work because it requires you to become involved in the personal struggles of those that you lead.

Acts 20:31: *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one **night and day with tears.***

3. Use Follow-Up to Investigate Concerns

- As leaders, we cannot get so busy finding new volunteers that we forget to check-up on our current team members to make sure they are doing things the way they are supposed to be done.
- Paul understood this. While his ministry did often begin with messages to large crowds of people, it never ended there. He understood the importance of follow-up.
- Even after moving on to a new town, Paul would often write letters back to established churches to investigate concerns of sinful behavior or false teaching that had crept in.

1 Corinthians 5:1: *“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.”*

Galatian 1:6: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:”*

- Ignorance is not bliss. If you have a feeling that something may be amiss in a ministry that you have leadership over, it is your responsibility to look into it.
- Many times a simple conversation could take care of an issue, but instead of engaging in the conversation, we become paralyzed by fear.
- In my experience, there are usually two main fears that keep leaders from investigating and resolving concerns that are volunteer-related?
 - Fear that the volunteer will get their feelings hurt and quit
 - Fear that our personal relationship with the volunteer will be damaged
- These are some strategies that can help you in this area:
 - **Improve your orientation training** - the more that you are train volunteers on the “front-end,” the less fires you will need to put out later.
 - **Follow-up often** - if the only time you reach out to someone from your team is when they are doing something wrong, they will grow to dread hearing from you. Correction is best received within the context of an on-going positive mentoring relationship.
 - **Use the “Positive, Negative, Positive” sandwich method** - if you are going to address a concern with a volunteer, try to begin and end the conversation with positives, and “sandwich” the concern in between.
 - **Focus on the issue, not the person** - as long as you confine your feedback to a specific issue, and you don't attack the volunteer's character, they will usually be very open to your opinions and advice.

What is the End-Result of Effective Follow-Up?

- New leaders that are well-equipped to serve God.
- Lives are impressed from a distance, but impacted up close.
- The Ephesians in Acts 20 were so impacted by Paul's leadership that they were now prepared to teach the gospel themselves. Paul's consistent ministry prepared them to do ministry themselves.

*Acts 20:28- Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, **over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers**, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

- Follow-up is something that you don't have to do. You have to want to do it. Your volunteers know this.
- For this reason, it often results in one more unexpected, but precious benefit: the development of a truly loving relationship between the leader and the volunteer.

Acts 20:38-39: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most all for the words which he speake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."