

Your Recruiting Remedy



*Take the
Headache
Out of Finding
and Keeping
Volunteers*

Judy
Wortley

With deep gratitude
to my mentor
David B. Vasquez

YOUR RECRUITING REMEDY

By Judy Wortley

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INTRODUCTION

Judy! My parents are going to be in town this weekend,” Cathy told me on Friday morning (my day off, of course). “I forgot to tell you. I realize this is late notice, but I hope you’ll be able to find a sub for my class this week.” Akkkk!

This was the fourth telephone call of the week of a similar nature. Okay, who haven’t I called this week that’s already told me no? My sub list just isn’t long enough to meet the need! (My sub list? What about the regular list? Is there any end to this?)

Oh, great! I just had my first volunteer in months call me and express a desire to teach Sunday school. I need someone (anyone!) in the two-year-old class, a real answer to prayer. But where does she want to teach? The fourth grade! Now what do I do? Tell her I don’t need her? I desperately need her!—in the two year olds!

Now what? It’s 9:50 P.M. Saturday night. James, teacher of the sixth grade, just telephoned with a case of the stomach flu. “I can’t possibly make it to class tomorrow, I’m just too sick. Sorry!” Should I combine his class with another? Maybe I can still find someone willing to fill in for tomorrow.

Sound familiar? Recruitment and staffing are probably the most talked about subjects in the world of Christian education. The Sunday school is the world’s largest volunteer organization. More men and women serve in the Sunday school than any other area of volunteer work in the entire world. Ninety percent of those volunteers work with children. But somehow more volunteers are always needed!

Recent years have seen a dramatic change in the secular world. The fast pace of American life leaves little time for volunteer activities. Many people give what little time is left over to Sunday mornings at the lake, sleeping in, or perhaps a child’s soccer tournament. Working mothers have increased so rapidly—65 percent of preschool and elementary kids are now

in homes with two incomes—three and a half times as many as in 1948. Divorce has created a multitude of single-parent families. These parents, mostly custodial mothers, are struggling to make ends meet and to keep emotions under control. “Such men and women—their numbers are increasing in our society—may expend so much energy coping with the daily stress of living that there is little time, strength or enthusiasm left over for parenting” (David Elkind, *The Hurried Child*).

Not only is there little energy left over for parenting, but there is little time, energy, or enthusiasm left over for volunteer work or ministry. The immense job of placing volunteers in service continues to loom before the church. The “me” generation has hung on. Do your own thing. Take care of yourself. If it’s too hard, skip it. Financial pressures continue to drive the number of working mothers even higher. Recruit volunteers for children’s ministry? Not an easy job in today’s society! It will be even more difficult in the years ahead.

But there is hope. Imagine the excitement that will come when you have a list of people waiting for the coveted job of ministering to children! An impossible dream? A challenge—yes. Impossible—no.

The fact that you purchased this book shows you care about the children in your church—children that are in all stages and walks of life, some hurt, some without parents, some from churched homes, some from non-churched homes, some easy to love, others not so easy. In your heart and mind, look into the future and see that these children will become men and women who will impact our world, some with positive influence, some with negative influence. The influence of the church, through the individual volunteer, may alter the course of their lives. The smallest hug, smile, or act of kindness, done in the power and through the name of our Lord Jesus, could greatly affect major decisions made in their teen years

and as young adults. As the church, we want to be a part of those decisions! The heart of your ministry is the precious volunteer—the hands and feet He uses to perpetuate His work.

This book is organized into two parts. Part 1 contains nine keys to successful recruitment. Part 2 presents five keys to effectively supporting your volunteers once they join the team. Please make this book your own—complete the activities, adapt the suggestions to fit your program, and let these ideas spark ideas of your own. With the Lord's help, your volunteers will come to see what a privilege it is to work with children. And may they come to see that those who work with children learn and laugh and grow as much as, if not more than, the children themselves.

While this book specifically addresses recruiting for children's ministry, the principles I talk about can be applied to recruiting any type of church worker. These principles will also work whether you have to recruit one or one hundred volunteers. These ideas have grown out of my experience in the church—both my successes and failures. I offer them to you as a co-laborer in the Lord's work. Thank you for your faithful service. May the Lord bless your recruiting efforts.





ESTABLISH

a children's ministry philosophy



- When you have mastered this key, you will be able to:
- Write out your philosophy of children's ministry.
 - Share that philosophy with teachers and helpers.
 - Explain your philosophy to your congregation.

How to Establish a Philosophy of Children's Ministry

In order to be effective in your recruitment efforts, there are some basic principles that you must establish from the beginning. One of those is the formation of your philosophy of children's ministry.

Decide Where You Are Going

If you don't know clearly where you are going and what you want to accomplish, you will find it difficult to ask others to join forces with you in ministering to children. If no one leads, no one will follow.

Your philosophy must be the hallmark of your ministry! Every volunteer that works with you must be aware of it. You need to constantly put this philosophy before the congregation and the staff with which you work.

An effective philosophy can be easily stated in one sentence. This way those who work with you will not only be able to remember it, they will be able to share the philosophy with the parents in your congregation as well as others who may be looking for a church with a good program for children. You will also find that a clearly stated philosophy helps focus your total ministry.

My personal philosophy is simply stated: "Every child entering our church should feel loved and valued as an individual." There could be any number of philosophy statements that would describe your ministry. Some other suggestions might be:

- "To help every child know he or she has a special place in the household of God."
- "To lead each child into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."
- "To help every child stand alone for Christ in the neighborhood and at school."

Once you have written out your philosophy, you will need to test it with the senior leadership of your church. The support of your pastor as well as other church staff will be essential if the philosophy is to succeed. See your pastor as a friend and partner in ministry.

Promote Your Philosophy

Once you have established a clear philosophy of children's ministry, it is important to communicate it so current teachers and helpers, future team members, and the whole church can work toward the same goals.

Here are some practical keys to propagating that philosophy:

 *Use it as a platform for all your basic announcements regarding children's ministry.*

 *Develop a logo to go with your statement. Your logo can be simple or elaborate. If you are not artistic, you may want to ask a volunteer to create something for you. Good clip art books are also available for your convenience in creating your logo.*

 *If you have a regularly published church newsletter, use that vehicle to talk about the great things happening in children's ministry.*

I've found it valuable to keep a record of special moments the Sunday school teachers tell me about. Sometimes it is a relationship that has arisen between the teacher and a child. Sometimes it is an incident that changed the life of a teacher or perhaps altered the course of a child's life. I write down these incidents to share later with my congregation. And when I do, I always include somewhere a reference to my philosophy of ministry.

 *During your teacher training meetings share with the teachers their importance to the individual child, including in that message your philosophy. Soon those who work with you will begin to clearly see they are part of something very significant and catch the vision you have for that ministry.*

If you are just beginning in your ministry to children, it may take some months before your church body catches the vision that children are the future church. That may be part of the reason God has called you to the children's ministry, to heighten an awareness that children are an essential part of the kingdom of God—our future generation—building the church of Jesus Christ. So, regardless of the size of your ministry, stop, pray, and write out your reason for your ministry's existence. You will never regret having taken the time to determine where you are going and why you are going there.

At this point, take a few moments to pray and work on your philosophy of children's ministry. Use the space on the following page to develop your thoughts.



God may have called you just so you can heighten people's awareness that children are part of God's kingdom.



Turning the Key:

My philosophy of children's ministry is...

Ideas for my logo: