

The Power of Thank You: Honor and Grow Your Ministry Teams

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The backbone of your ministry is your volunteer ministry team. While worship and preaching stand out, every person working matters. Volunteers pour their time, energy, and gifts into creating and executing young adult ministry. Do not take them for granted!

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of gratitude. Paul expressed his thanks to ministry partners often. He encouraged the church to do the same as well. In Romans 16, Paul personally thanked multiple individuals by name. He went out of his way to name them and to note their individual contributions. A good example is Priscilla and Aquila:

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them” (Romans 16:3-4, NIV).

This is a great model for us as young adult leaders to follow. Your affirmation—your public affirmation— goes a long way in strengthening your ministry. It also serves as a great recruiting method.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, Paul asked, “Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.” While this is often used in the discussion of pastors, it applies to all who are working hard in your ministry. Honor and thanks are our biblical responsibility.

Strong leaders cultivate a culture of appreciation. This is not an occasional thank you or a quick high five in the hallway. It’s a purposeful strategy and practice to help young adults feel valued.

It also prevents ministry dropouts. When someone doesn’t feel valued, they won’t continue to serve. Sometimes a simple, “Thank you,” is all that is needed to make someone feel that they are valued and their contribution is seen.

Here are some ways to develop a gratitude culture:

1. Write Personalized Thank-You Notes

Emails and texts are good, but there is power in written communication. Handwritten notes stand out in a digital communication world—even with young adults! Document someone’s hard work and ministry with your life-giving words.

2. Schedule Your Thanks

In my office, I have a box of pre-addressed thank you cards. These are for key volunteers in my areas of ministry. I try every month to grab cards from this box and send them out. These are just “I’m thinking of you and I’m grateful,” cards. This helps me make sure everyone feels honored at some point.

3. Include Thank You Notes as the Last Step of Activities and Events

Our goal is to have the volunteer thank you cards planned and, if possible, written before the event finishes. If we have a party, we thank the people who helped work on it. I include meaningful thank you’s in the budget for the event if people go over and above. We recently had a lunch for young adults. The amount of people who came doubled the week of the event. Charity led the cook team for lunch. This put a lot of stress on her at the last minute. That week she received flowers and a nicely written thank you note.

4. Host a Volunteer Appreciation Event

Ministry teams need to do more than just minister—they need to be celebrated. We often host these leadership groups at our house for dessert or meet up at a coffee shop. Our Christmas party at the end of the year is for ministry teams.

5. Celebrate a Key Volunteer Each Month

Every month we give an award to a volunteer. We bring that person on stage during service and celebrate them. It’s always a fun moment of honor and culture setting.

Every ministry will have its own creative ways to honor and thank volunteers. Spend time making a plan and executing it. Allow gratitude to become a powerful, biblical tool to transform your young adult ministry. Saying “Thank you” reflects the heart of the Lord and builds a strong young adult ministry team.