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Recruiting Like Jesus Recruited

by Jim Wideman

The Bible has a lot to say about recruiting volunteers. People always seem surprised to hear that. We've come to believe that "recruitment" was invented recently.

Jesus managed to recruit without bulletin inserts and without announcements made from the pulpit. Somehow He was able to recruit people as "disciples," which involved more than a six-month commitment and a willingness to attend a couple of training meetings.

That's why Jesus is my model for recruiting volunteers. I think He showed us everything we need to know about it in His ministry.

At Church on the Move, we've had good success applying Jesus' recruitment principles and practices. I've got some of the finest volunteers I've ever met serving with me, and I'd trust them with my life. Even more—I've trusted them with my children's lives as my daughters have grown up and gone through those classrooms.

In my book, *Volunteers That Stick*, I go into great detail regarding twelve of Jesus' recruitment principles and tell the reader how we've put them to use. I want to introduce you briefly to my favorite seven.

Recruit by Vision

Don't talk about your desperate need for volunteers.

Talk about



what those people who are selected to serve in children's ministry will do and the impact they'll have on young lives.

If you're leading your children's ministry, you are the vision-caster. Jesus talked about the kingdom of God, and people responded. Could they see it? Taste it? Touch it? Not really... but they could feel it. They felt it in the words of Jesus and the vision He shared.

Walk the Talk

Whatever I require others to do, I have to do. Volunteers value authenticity. They value integrity. Have both. Jesus is the ultimate example of that. He didn't expect James and John to walk away from the family business to serve God without doing the same thing himself. Jesus was faithful all the way to the cross. He has the moral authority to ask the same of you.

Matter of Prayer

Jesus made everything a matter of prayer—including recruitment.

Forty days in the wilderness. Forty days of prayer and fasting. Jesus had plenty of time to talk things through with God.

It's not recorded what Jesus prayed about, but I believe with all my heart He asked God to lead him to the right people. I believe that because the first thing Jesus did when He walked out of the wilderness was recruit some help.

You and I have a tendency to do everything but pray.

Are you praying for the Lord

to bring you the right people to staff your children's ministry?

Filling the Roster

Jesus took His time to fill the roster. Jesus needed twelve disciples ... but He recruited in ones and twos. Could Jesus have

lined up twelve recruits in a bigger hurry? I think so—but He wouldn't have gotten the people He wanted.

Take your time getting people placed in your program. You're building a team and discerning giftedness, not

just scribbling names onto an organizational chart. If you want leaders to emerge from your program, and people to stick long term, take your time recruiting the right people, not just whosoever is willing!

Questions for Further Study—

1. As a children's pastor, do you have "vision" for your ministry that is easy to communicate in one or two sentences?
2. How much time do you allow to pray over the recruiting process of your ministry? Set a goal per week and schedule time to pray over each volunteer and those whom you want to ask to join your team.
3. Has there been a time where you have clearly seen the Lord's hand in keeping people away from your ministry?

part 2 of 2—

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The Draft

Jesus instituted a draft. He wasn't shy about getting the people He wanted on His team. In fact, He didn't recruit them as much as He drafted them.

"You come and follow me," doesn't sound like a question. It's a command.

I don't have quite the authority Jesus has, but when it comes to getting people working in children's ministry, I don't ask for volunteers either.

Here's my favorite way to recruit people: I walk up to folks in my church and ask, "What are you doing in this church?" Most of the time they say, "Nothing."

So I say, "That's what I thought. Fill out this four-page worker application. I'm going to make a children's worker out of you."

And you know what I hear? Most of the time I hear, "Okay."

Now, keep in mind that when I ask people to work in the nursery, I'm asking them to *apply* to work in the nursery. I'm inviting

them to enter into a discussion about whether they're the right fit for work in the nursery. They won't necessarily end up working with babies; we'll sort that out through the interview process. But until we get talking, nothing happens.

Seize Opportunities

Jesus went out looking for workers. He



didn't wait for workers to come find Him. When Jesus recruited His first disciples, He was walking out by the Sea of Galilee; He wasn't back in His office behind a desk filling out paperwork. He was out drafting the people He

needed.

Here's my advice for any children's ministry leader who's frustrated with not having enough help: Go out and find people. Go where people are. I go to church, to men's meetings, to women's meetings ... anywhere I might find people who love God and who haven't found a place to plug into service yet.

And I'll run databases from the church computer, too. I run a list of all our members, then a list of people who are volunteering already somewhere else. That gives me a list of potential volunteers.

I'm always looking, and guess what? That means I'm always finding, too.

Look for Commitment

Jesus required commitment, not just sacrifice. He didn't make it easy for people who were coming to help Him. Read through the Gospels with a highlighter and mark everything Jesus had to say about volunteering. Jesus never once asked someone to sacrifice. Instead, He asked for commitment. The sacrifices followed, but they flowed

