

8 Questions to Ask Every Volunteer

Volunteer development is crucial to every healthy children's and youth ministry. Asking questions is a huge part of helping those volunteers feel valued.

Here are a few questions that every ministry volunteer would love to be asked:

1. "How can I help you?"

This question communicates to your volunteers that *you're in the trenches with them*. There's an old saying that goes: "You can't lead where you've never been." True in ministry. A word of warning: Be prepared. You might get more than you bargained for. You might trigger a frustrated volunteer. You might stumble upon someone who's approaching burnout. Show your commitment to them by following through.

2. "Can I get you anything?"

A huge key here is learning the art of anticipation. Just like a server at a restaurant learns his regulars' favorite orders, study your volunteers so well that you expect their response before they give it. Be able to say: "I thought you might need that. Can I get that for you next week?" Listen attentively and get what they ask for quickly.

3. "How can I pray for you?"

Ah...the old standby. This question speaks to the spiritual significance of volunteer ministry. But in the wrong hands, this question can feel cliché – like it's the question you're *supposed* to ask. A few thoughts to keep things sincere:

- Pray with them right there.
- Don't let their request dangle there – have a conversation.
- Be prepared to give them a break from ministry obligations if possible.
- Follow up with an email, text, or note. "Hey ____, I want you to know that I've been praying for...How's that going?"

4. "Can I share what you're doing?"

Everyone loves to feel like they're appreciated. One way to show your appreciation for volunteers is to share what they're doing. Keep in mind that most volunteers will happily stay below the radar and will probably be reluctant to talk about themselves. So share in a way that celebrates *them* – not just their accomplishments. You could share their efforts with church leadership, through social media, or with other volunteers. Keep in mind that's your goal here is to serve *them*. Not just elevate the ministry.

5. “How is your family?”

Sometimes it's easy for volunteers to feel like ministry drones. Prevent that feeling. Get to know what's most important to them: their family. Learn their family members' names. Listen to what's going on their family life. Remember that after your volunteers clean up the crayons, put the name tags away, and Lysol the toy bin, they head back home to the most important “volunteer” field they'll ever be a part of.

6. “If I could alleviate one tension, what would it be?”

When you ask this question, it's important that you're in a safe atmosphere. Don't ask the Sunday School teacher who's drowning in toddlers at the moment. Don't ask the nursery worker who's dealing with six screaming two-year-olds. Make sure they feel safe. Make sure they feel like they can be open with you. This might mean saying, “...*You know what – You can think about it. Would it be alright if I circled back with you later?*” Give them time for deeper issues to surface.

7. “How can I do better?”

In the workplace, most employees only have a conversation with their boss when they want to talk about poor job performance – how *they* can improve as an employee. But this is ministry. Things are different here. Invert that by having a conversation about how *you* can improve. The trick here is not to ask for their thoughts out of false humility or self-deprecation. Be confident in your belief that your volunteers can help you grow as a leader.

8. “What else would you like to do?”

This question can feel like volunteer-suicide: *I can't ask them what else they'd like to do! I just got them to stay here!* True. You might lose them. That's okay. Because this question gets to the heart of volunteer development: *>seeing people connect with what God wants for them.* A curious effect of asking this question is that the volunteer feels so valued that they opt to stay. Feeling valued trumps feeling busy any day.

How about you?

Any questions you'd like to add?