

*A Big Youth Ministry Topic
in a Single Little Book*



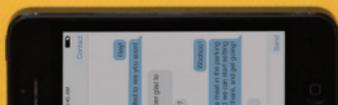
THE SKINNY

ON

VOLUNTEERS



Jonathan McKee
with Danette Matty



Group



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in a Single Little Book*



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The Skinny on Volunteers

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JESUS- CENTERED

Guide your entire ministry toward a passionate Jesus-centered focus with this series of innovative resources. Harness the power of these dynamic tools that will help you draw teenagers and leaders into a closer orbit around Jesus.

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Credits

Authors: Jonathan McKee with Danette Matty

Executive Developer: Tim Gilmour

Executive Editor: Rick Lawrence

Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz

Editor: Rob Cunningham

Art Director and Cover Art: Veronica Preston

Cover Photography: Rodney Stewart

Production: Joyce Douglas

Project Manager: Stephanie Krajec

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ISBN 978-1-4707-2087-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 21 20 19 18 17 16 15

Printed in the United States of America.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Jesus my Lord, who is the source of anything good that comes out of me, and who I'd be lost without.

Thanks to my family for putting up with me while writing this book. When I finished this project, Ashley shouted, "Good, we can have the living room back!" (Yes, our most comfy chair is in our living room!)

A huge shoutout to my blog readers at JonathanMcKeeWrites.com for this book. When I finished a draft on a Friday, I asked if anyone would like to read it over the weekend and offer their "two cents," and I had a phenomenal response. So a huge thanks especially to Corey Speer, Jeff Dempsey, Sharon Schultz, Kevin Downey, Jono Davis, Kyle Bueermann, Jared Callis, Dan Davis, Matthew Erickson, Lisa Burris, Ramona Gramly, Kenneth Taylor, Jordan Spivey, Sharon Hannaby, Nick Mance, Lou Jordan, Kathie Barkow, Rob Vande Lune, Kyle Wassom, JT Toler, Jake Bartkovsky, Dan Neighbors, David Brinkley, Chad Feight, and Jenn Chen.

I also have to thank my friend Danette Matty for working with me on this project. Danette and I worked together years ago; it was so good to work together again.

And always a big thanks to my agent and friend Greg Johnston!

— **Jonathan McKee**

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BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

The book you're holding might be “skinny,” but that's because it's all-muscle. This means that Jonathan McKee and Danette Matty have cut away the fat and focused on the “first things” that make volunteer leadership in youth ministry powerful and long-lasting. In our Skinny Books series, we've paired a thought leader (in this case, Jonathan McKee) with a master practitioner (in this case, Danette Matty) as a one-two punch. We want you to be challenged and equipped in both your thinking and your doing.

And, as a bonus, we've added an Introduction written by Kurt Johnston and Katie Edwards that explores volunteer leadership through the filter of a Jesus-centered approach to ministry. Jesus-centered is much more than a catchphrase to us—it's a passionate and transformative approach to life and ministry. Kurt and Katie's Introduction to volunteers first appeared in my book *Jesus-Centered Youth Ministry*, and we couldn't think of a better way to kick off this little book. It's time to get skinny...

—RICK LAWRENCE

Executive Editor of Group Magazine

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus was the first person in the church to develop a team of volunteers to help him fulfill his ministry call. Jesus had lots to do and a short time to do it. He and his ragtag group of disciples forged a unique team that changed the world.

The two of us have partnered in youth ministry together for almost 20 years—two decades of summer camps, surf outings, mission trips, and memories. We've learned a *whole lot* of youth ministry lessons, but one that we've been reminded about over and over again is that youth ministry really couldn't happen without a team of adult volunteers.

One of the first things Jesus did when he began his public ministry was to build a team to help out. Youth ministry is a fast-paced, stress-filled, never-ending job. It's tempting to focus on the tasks at hand (planning the next event, writing the next lesson, T.P.-ing the next house) and overlook the most important task: building a team to make an eternal difference. Let's learn from Jesus' example...

1. **Jesus enlisted.** Jesus didn't sit around and hope that what he was about to do would attract people to his cause. Instead, he enlisted others to join his team. He made "the ask" in a compelling way. In Matthew 4:19, when he said to Peter and Andrew, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people," imagine how compelling that

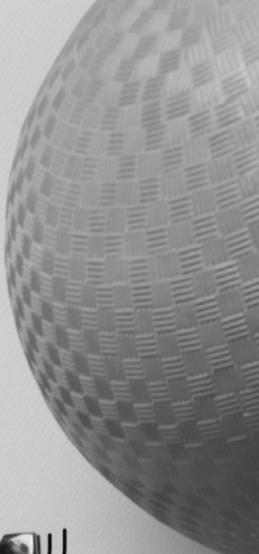
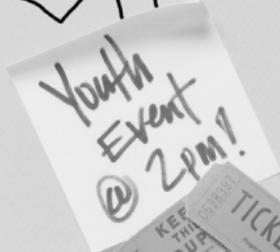
must have sounded to two young men who made their living being fishers of fish!

- 2. Jesus equipped.** Jesus knew the stakes were high. In just a few years, his little team of fishermen, doctors, and doubters would have to continue his work. So instead of spending time lecturing them with fill-in-the-blank training sessions, he equipped them by giving them a whole lot of on-the-job training.
- 3. Jesus empowered.** As Jesus equipped his leaders, he also empowered them. He encouraged Peter's bold proclamation by encouraging him to walk on water! When the disciples shared their concern that the multitudes listening to him teach were getting hungry, he said, "You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37, NIV). Before he ascended into heaven, he empowered them with the Holy Spirit and reminded them of the task at hand.

Jesus chose to partner with those who loved him to expand his Father's kingdom—he enlisted, equipped, and empowered others to play a crucial role in his redemptive mission. He certainly *could* have done it all on his own, but because relationship is paramount to him, he decided to partner...with us.

—Kurt Johnston, *Director of Student Ministries at Saddleback Church*

—Katie Edwards, *Junior High Pastor at Saddleback Church*



CHAPTER



1

*Which
Is
Better?*



HELLO!

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Two different youth ministries, two different states, both from similar-sized churches with comparable budgets, both in the month of September. One ministry was fizzling out and struggling, and the other was booming.

The difference?

A leader who valued volunteers.

Honestly, ask yourself: Which is better?

- A. A magnetic, relational youth leader who loves hanging out with kids.
- B. A solid youth leader who can recruit 20 to 30 relational volunteers who *each* love hanging out with kids.

All other factors being equal, which would you rather have? Who would you rather be?

As I visited these two churches, it became very evident what kind of leader each church had hired.

THE TEXAS LONE RANGER

The first was a church of about 1,000 in Texas. The youth pastor was sharp, educated, and looked just a hair too

much like Channing Tatum. He brought me out to speak at one of his events.

When he first called me I asked him, “Would you like me to do some training with your team while I’m there? It’s no extra cost. I’m happy to do any of my workshops while ya got me there.”

“Thanks,” he replied. “I actually have that handled. But we’re super excited for you to speak at our Battle of the Bands event!”

I’ll never forget my dinner with this guy before the event. He was frustrated with his ministry on several levels:

1. He had 30-40 teenagers coming to his program each week, but he felt like they were just slipping in and out. They weren’t connecting with anyone.
2. He had a number of kids who needed to be disciplined. He was running a Bible study where he was trying to disciple them all at once, but the study was chaotic and often wandered off onto tangents.
3. He was out too many nights and was spread too thin.

4. He felt like his senior pastor wasn't supportive, especially in the area of budget. This youth pastor wanted to hire a bunch of interns to expand his ministry, but the senior pastor insisted on using volunteers.

Frankly, every problem he shared with me was something that pointed to his need for a team of volunteers who would love kids, connect with them, and disciple them.

He had three volunteers—*including his wife*.

We finished dinner and dived into the Battle of the Bands. His event brought out about 45 kids. It was unorganized and out of control.

I heard he left the church a year later.

THE WICHITA TEAM

The second church was in Wichita, Kansas—another church of about 1,000. The church hired my dad and me to come out and train leaders to be better at recruiting and retaining volunteers. We arrived the night before and peeked in on an outreach event in the gym.

Our jaws almost dropped to the floor. The church was almost the exact same size as the Texas church, but we were looking at over 150 middle schoolers filling a gymnasium. And as I looked around the room, I counted almost 40 volunteers hanging out with kids, laughing and interacting.

We'd never seen so many volunteers!

As we talked with the youth pastor later that evening, he told us, "We are so excited to have you guys here to train us. We really have a lot to learn about volunteers."

My dad and I looked at each other like, *Really? Because it looks like we are the ones who should be taking notes here!*

One guy—who desperately needed some training—didn't want any training. He "had it handled."

And his ministry was suffering.

The other guy—who was doing an amazing job—humbly wanted to do it even better.

And God was doing amazing things through this ministry.

Which one are you?

A youth ministry needs a solid group of volunteers to be truly effective. We youth workers all know this—but how do we make it happen?

Many of us don't do much when it comes to mobilizing volunteers and equipping them for ministry. Our plate is already full, and building a great team sounds like yet another task to add to the list.

But what if your efforts to mobilize and equip volunteers actually lightened your schedule? What if this investment of time actually paid back double, quadruple, or even tenfold?

The Skinny on Volunteers will help you concentrate on three simple skills that will help you mobilize and equip leaders: recruiting, keeping, and training volunteers.

Yes, volunteers take time. But you'll discover the rewards of investing in a team of people who will love teenagers, connect with them, and disciple them.



JONATHAN MCKEE is the author of over a dozen books including *Get Your Teenager Talking*, *More Than Just the Talk*, the *10-Minute Talks* series, and *The Guy's Guide to God, Girls, and the Phone in Your Pocket*. Jonathan speaks and trains at conferences, churches and events worldwide, all while providing free resources on TheSource4YM.com and TheSource4Parents.com. Jonathan, his wife Lori and his three kids live in Northern California. JonathanMcKeeWrites.com / [Twitter.com/InJonathansHead](https://twitter.com/InJonathansHead)



DANETTE MATTY has been a volunteer youth worker since big hair was in the first time. She serves at Christ's Place church in Lincoln, Nebraska, as director of Christ's Place Leadership College. An Air Force veteran, she's written for ministry magazines and online publications, has contributed to nine books, and in 2012 wrote her first book, *99 Thoughts for Volunteers*. Danette says she's still her husband's girlfriend after almost 30 years, and she's mom to two young adults.



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Group

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ISBN 978-1-4707-2085-8 USD \$6.99



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Religion/Christian Ministry/Youth

Printed in the U.S.A.