



Motivating Volunteers in the Small Church

“Releasing Big Impact from Small Teams”

Scripture Focus: *Colossians 3:23* – “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”

Lesson Overview

In small churches, volunteers are the backbone of ministry. But with limited staff and resources, keeping people motivated can be a challenge.

This lesson equips leaders to understand **what truly drives volunteers** — and how to cultivate a culture where service feels meaningful, appreciated, and Spirit-led.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the main reasons people volunteer in ministry.
2. Recognize common causes of volunteer burnout or discouragement.
3. Apply practical strategies to inspire and retain volunteers.
4. Create a personal plan to strengthen volunteer motivation in their church.

Part 1 – Understanding the Heart of a Volunteer

1. People Volunteer for Three Core Reasons

1. **Purpose** – They want to feel their service matters to something bigger.
2. **People** – They serve because they feel connected to others.
3. **Personal Growth** – They want to use or discover their gifts.

1 Peter 4:10 – “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others.”

Discussion Question:

- Which of these three motivators do you think drives most of your volunteers right now?

Part 2 – Common Barriers to Volunteer Motivation

1. Lack of Clear Vision

- Volunteers lose motivation when they don't know *why* their role matters.

2. Overuse / Burnout

- A small number of volunteers often carry too much responsibility.

3. Lack of Appreciation

- A “thank you” goes further than most leaders realize.

4. Unclear Expectations

- Frustration grows when people don't know what success looks like.

5. No Spiritual Renewal

- Volunteers need to *serve from overflow*, not exhaustion.

Reflection Question:

“Do I spend more time assigning tasks or affirming people?”

Part 3 – Biblical Model for Motivating Volunteers

1. Jesus Empowered His Team

- *Mark 6:7–13* — He sent the disciples two by two with authority, not burdens.
- He gave **clarity, community, and confidence**.

2. Nehemiah's Example

- Nehemiah motivated volunteers to rebuild Jerusalem's wall by:
 - Casting vision: “*Let us rise up and build.*”
 - Organizing teams by families and skills.
 - Encouraging unity and recognizing progress.

Part 4 – Five Practical Strategies for Small-Church Motivation

1. Cast Vision Frequently

Vision leaks — refill it often.

- Re-state the “why” at every meeting.
- Connect each volunteer’s role to the larger mission of the church.

Example:

- *“You’re not just greeting — you’re the first smile of Jesus people see.”*

2. Create Belonging

- Build small volunteer communities — prayer huddles, check-ins, or lunch gatherings.
- Use fellowship to fuel faith.

3. Celebrate Progress, Not Perfection

- Publicly recognize even small wins.
- Have a “Volunteer Appreciation Sunday” or spotlight one volunteer weekly.

>> Recognition doesn’t cost money — it costs intention. <<

4. Serve Your Servants

- Pastors and leaders should invest in their volunteers’ growth.
- Provide devotionals, encouragement texts, and spiritual check-ins.
- Ask: “How can I pray for you?” — not just, “Can you serve next Sunday?”

5. Match Gifts to Ministry

- Use simple spiritual gift or passion assessments.
- When people serve where they're gifted, energy increases instead of drains.

Part 5 – Building a Culture of Encouragement

The RELA Volunteer Model

Core Value	Description	Example
R – Relationship	People are motivated by connection.	Personal calls, check-ins.
E – Empowerment	Give authority and trust.	Let volunteers own projects.
L – Leadership Support	Equip them spiritually and emotionally	Short training, mentoring.
A – Appreciation	Recognize and reward service.	Notes, shoutouts, prayer time.

Part 6 – Reflection and Application

Self-Evaluation

- Do my volunteers feel valued and seen?
- How often do I affirm them publicly or privately?
- Am I training people to serve — or just to fill roles?

Action Steps

1. Write down three ways to express gratitude this month.
2. Schedule a 10-minute “vision moment” for your next volunteer meeting.
3. Identify one volunteer to mentor or affirm this week.