

THE ART OF THE ASK

Teacher Notes

INTRO

Good evening, for those that I haven't met yet, my name is Chris Kakaras and tonight I'd like to talk to you about the power of a well done invitation. (slide)

All these guys know what I'm talking about.

I should also mention. These slides are what I use for our staff trainings not really for church-wide use. Therefore they may be kinda silly, maybe borderline inappropriate, I have been told. So if ya'll can just not tell our Rachel from HR that would be great.

Today I'm gonna share some universal truths on a very effective strategy to inviting people in to be a part of what you are trying to accomplish. This is the definition of recruiting.

And there are a lot of really ineffective ways to recruit. Many of which, the people in the room, including all staff, pastors, and myself have done.

HARD WORK DISCLAIMER

The methods that I suggest will have positive results if you use them. However, I'm not going to lie. You can't be lazy and do this method. This requires effort upfront. It'll take phone calls with your actual voice. Face to face interactions. If you want to recruit people to serve in roles through a few texts and emails, this is not going to be the training for you. But I will say, if you skimp on the effort, you're gonna have to do it all over again. And you can either blame the people you are trying to lead for flaking out or you can look in the mirror.

INVITING PEOPLE IN IS GOOD

Alright, here is a problematic example of a common approach that we see in recruiting volunteers.

Let's say you're trying to recruit Brad to do a core group job. You'll say "Brad, I'm trying to get a core team together cause there is a lot that needs to get done. I know you have a wife and kids and know you have zero time to help with this so you probably don't want

to be part of the team do you.”

So that’s like physically impossible to respond positively to that kind of invitation. Like even if they wanted to do it, there’s a lot of negatives, I wouldn’t even know how to say yes to it.

You made it really hard for Brad to accept your invitation. And the reason why we want to do this is because we are super nice people that don’t want to seem intrusive so we pretty much say no for people.

But if you honestly believe that asking someone to help is a benefit to them and to the church and to the advancing of the mission of God, we shouldn’t have a hard time with this. The reason why you are in this room right now is because somewhere along the way a person invited you to take on weight and be a part of ministry. And that weight ultimately grew you into the person you are today. That person was not burdening you. And neither are we.

So when you ask someone to volunteer, rather than think you’re burdening someone. Believe it’s actually helpful for them. The way you actually believe it was helpful for you. And ask confidently.

Today my training will explore what makes an invitation well done and powerful. What are the elements that cause an invitation to be so well received and easy to say yes to. And why the lack of those elements make you naturally inclined to say no.

COMMON MISTAKES

I’d like to cover 3 of the most common pitfalls that I see in recruiting volunteers and then I will reveal the strategy that I think you should take. Again, it takes effort on the front end but has greater sustainability and reliability.

TOO RELIANT ON TEXT & EMAIL

This is one of the biggest mistakes that I’ve seen made. Trying to recruit through texts or mass emails. And I know the reason why we do it. It’s easy.

Let’s say after tonight you are so motivated to recruit people in core team roles. So your instinct is to go home and carefully craft an amazing email to send to your entire lifegroup. You’ll include some vision, some bible verses. All the different roles that people can volunteer for. I mean really wordsmith it. Takes you about 30 minutes. And then you click send. And you feel like...boom. I did it. I recruited. (dust hands off).

I get why it's a compelling strategy. It maximizes your reach with limited effort. That is true. However, it does not maximize your effectiveness. And you will ultimately end up being frustrated.

The reason why this strategy is ineffective is because it's not compelling to the reader. A mass text or email is very impersonal, it's very easy to gloss over and not even consider. And you'll probably get no responses. If you get a response it's more so that person wants to bail you out in spite of your bad leadership.

But if nobody responds you're gonna be left thinking, I can't believe none of these lazy people want to help. And this group and ministry is all on me. And you know what happens next for you...nothing good. We've seen this story over and again.

So don't take the shortcut of being too reliant on tech for recruiting. Pitfall #2

RECRUITING FOLKS ALREADY DOING STUFF

This pitfall might not apply to some of ya'll. I mean if you have nobody that serves in your group and you literally are the only one that does anything...then there is nobody in this category for you. But I'll explain how it could apply to you.

So your email didn't work out, nobody responded. You decide to do some face to face recruiting and you start with the best person out of your group. They love Jesus, they've been around Midtown for years, they are sacrificial with their time and money, they serve in kidtown, young life leaders on the side, and are overall on board with what our church is trying to do. They are already very involved. And you recruit them to come on board and do a core group role (or two depending on their level of niceness and inability to say no). And because they're awesome they say yes and they start helping out. For the first bit it's amazing but then you notice some red flags. You catch wind from someone else in the group that they are feeling burnt out and over committed. And you start to see things they used to do well, start falling through the cracks. Ultimately they end up quitting on you. And in this scenario typically the area is in a bigger mess than when you started. It might not end that way but I've seen it happen enough to believe it's a likely possibility.

Like I said, may or may not directly apply but wanted to mention this possible pitfall just in case. Last pitfall...

LACK OF FOCUS ON RETAINING

Retaining? I don't think about that or even really know what it means. I know, it's a common pitfall many people are in danger of this.

Anyone that you are leading is here today and gone tomorrow. Why don't we think like that? I mean that's just reality.

It is way harder to replace volunteers than putting in creative energy and effort on retaining volunteers. Making sure they are thriving. Making sure they are equipped. Making sure they know what they are doing matters.

If you recruit someone and let them just do their job without any amount of oversight, no checking in or care...that's actually not leading, that's abdicating. You'd be a LG abdicator, not LG leader. Now again, it may work out and that person does a good job. But it's in spite of your leadership, not because of it.

In order to be helpful with some practical examples of ways to retain your people serving and avoid the potential for them to feel alone and dumped on, I've got 3 tips for you. And this is not comprehensive, it's just to get your mind turning in the direction I'm trying to get it to go.

1. **Have upward mobility** - People love being promoted. They love working up to something. Give them something to look forward to.

I know you guys are like "what is he talking about" this is a LG. We aren't paying people, this is volunteering and people aren't motivated to get promoted to do MORE stuff. I understand there are complexities to this but let me explain to you the concept. I'll use the children in my home as an example.

This is my family. These are my 3 kids, Julie, Gus, Charlie, 11, 8, and 6.

They are at the ages that they've been doing dishes for a while now. The 6 year old unloads the top rack of the dishwasher. My 8 year old unloads the bottom rack of the dishwasher. And Julie my 11 year old loads the dishwasher. My intention was never for this to be their jobs forever. My goal is to train them. Not just create a system where me and Meg don't do dishes. Which is awesome I might add. But that's a perk, not the goal.

They are experts at their jobs. They are confident in what needs to get done. They know how to troubleshoot when the dishwasher needs to be reset. They know where stuff goes. They know that if they just throw the tupperware in the cupboard willy nilly, it's going to

become a nightmare and stuff won't fit in there. It is a well oiled machine. And last weekend I brought chaos. I gave promotions.

- Charlie, my 6 year old now unloads all dishes in the dishwasher
- Gus, my 8 year old now loads all the dishes
- And Julie, now does our dinner 3 nights a week (this helps me cause this was my job) and is going to do laundry, towels and kids clothes 3 nights a week).

And I need to tell you the truth. They are all excited about it. They are. People like being trained. People like contributing. Every morning when I drop Julie off from middle school I see a retired old man sitting in a lawn chair on the corner of a busy intersection with a stop sign to help whenever a kid needs to cross the street to get to school. And he loves it. Cause he's contributing.

My kids want to grow in contribution. Our jobs around the house are not dumping stuff on them cause me and Meg don't want to do it. And it is evident in our entire house culture. So I'm telling you the truth...I have witnessed the principle in practice for a bunch of moody self centered kids. It can work in your group. Yes you will need to figure out the culture and how to set those roles up with upward mobility in mind. But the principle is out there for you to take advantage of.

So have upward mobility...it will aid you in your ability to retain folks. And a lack of focus on retaining is a huge pitfall leaders fall into.

2. **Create experts.** People love being an expert at something that nobody else could do as well as them. Give them this gift. Put in the training plan and time needed to get them on this path.

I think that's also why the jobs that my kids do in my house is working. Cause it has given them confidence. They feel strong when they contribute to their family. And I tell them as much. I say thank you for contributing to our family, it is so helpful to all of us. And so helpful to me and mom...who they know do so much for them. That does make them feel good. And motivates them to keep doing their jobs and do it well.

So creating experts is a great strategy in retaining your people to do their jobs.

This is a side note but I also tie their performance to upward mobility too. I tell Julie one day she is going to be the age where I can hand her my car keys. And I do not hand my car keys to people who do not do dishes right or cut corners wherever they can. That doesn't directly relate to lg core team but you can try it... be like, if you ever wanna borrow my car you gotta do a good job at LG.

Last tip for retaining people to do their jobs so they don't flake out on you.

3. **Have terms of commitment.** This one is more a personal strategy that I have observed. I have found that the volunteering roles that have a term of commitment may end up working longer and finishing strong when they have that term mapped out.

I've worked with a lot of college students in the past. I have noticed that when it's an indefinite serving role, with no time parameters they usually don't serve for an entire year. They quit and I think it's sometimes because there just is no end in sight and like I said previously people do not like stagnation, they love upward mobility. New experiences. New challenges. New development opportunities. But when I have used a term of commitment. Like, serve in this job for one year, they end up finishing stronger than if they had no time parameter. They end up not flaking out. And honestly, if someone is thriving in their role, there is even a high likelihood of them renewing for another term.

Or we can just say thank you for your faithfulness and service and send them out. Again, not sure if this is a must. This is just a tip and option that wanted you to be aware of.

COMMON PITFALLS CONCLUSION

Overall you're just looking out for your people. That's it. That's what we are talking about when I'm saying focus on retaining. People can tell when they are being used. And they won't want to stay in that role for very long. So focus on retaining by looking out for your people.

You are like a trainer in the gym. You want them to carry as much weight as possible but are also keenly aware of what is too much. Finding the balance to make sure they are both productive and cared for. It'd be a pretty sucky trainer if they were just like...lift more and more and more without paying any attention to what their needs are. That's how some people lead and it's a common mistake and very ineffective.

Focus on retaining is worth the effort.

I'd like to now move into not what you should avoid doing but what I actually want you to do.

GUERRILLA RECRUITING

As you history buffs know. This is a style of warfare. Like think of the American Revolution. Go back with me to 1775. I'll give you the highlights England came over with about a million men all standing in lines. We had a bunch of farmers with pitchforks and came from a bunch of different angles and beat them like a drum.

That term guerilla warfare was just the idea of hand to hand strategy and tactics. Guerilla recruiting is a similar idea, we are going to have a hand to hand strategy and attack at a few different angles.

It's 3 easy steps.

STEP 1: BRING IN YOUR ALLIES

Most lifegroup leaders have their ride or die. Or maybe a couple. In my lifegroup, we got a LG leader and then 2 more that are in and help with ideas and direction and do our best to push in the same direction as the leader. Go to that person or couple of people.

And you tell them about the 4 roles you are trying to recruit. Keep in mind, you are not trying to recruit them to do these roles...yet. But you want to engage them in conversation and say here's what I'm trying to do. And this is the type of skills, gifts, wiring, whatever kind of person I'm looking for to fit each of these roles. And ask them, who are the people in our group that would be good at each of these roles. That's all you're asking them for. Nothing else.

It'd be great if each of them engaged and suggested multiple names for this. If that happens, it would do 2 things:

1. It would create buy-in from them because they participated and you were listening. Which is awesome.
2. And it also allows for it to accurately feel like more people are recruiting them into a role than just you. Which is awesome.

And it also sets you up for step 2.

STEP 2: WARM CALLS

You are going to call the people that were recommended in Step #1.

This step is necessary if you do not know the person very well or haven't known them for

very long. If you know the person well you will skip Step #2 and go to Step #3. But if you don't really have a relationship with this person yet, you're going to want to give them a warm call.

Now we all know what cold calls are. They are out of the blue, out of nowhere, nobody likes those calls. This is a warm call cause you have a really good lead in.

Call them and I always start with, "Hey I want to run an idea by you, did I catch you at an ok time?" I always say this because if they don't have the time you can't do it. If they're about to go into surgery and you're like, I think you'd be really good at welcoming new people in our LG...it's just not the right time.

But if they say yes, here's how you turn it into a warm call.

"I was talking the other day with a few folks from our LG and when we were talking your name was brought up and spoke really highly of you and said you might be a good fit in a role we are making. Any chance you would want to hear about it and maybe let's get together in person to discuss it some more?"

They're going to be intrigued. They always are. So I say great, what I do is, I say one sentence about the role and say why I'm looking for folks who are like this and like that and when I heard some about you and you coming highly recommended I really wanted to reach out. Then I always get the next step lined up. I say do you have any availability to grab lunch with me this week to talk more in person? Or ask them to come early before LG next week to talk more in person. Or whatever.

If they say yes, you got them. If they come to that meeting with you they are gonna be down to clown.

STEP 3: FACE TO FACE

Once you have your meeting, face to face, I want to have my stuff together enough so it's a role that is easy to say yes to. What I personally do is I always write out a job description. People love knowing expectations on them.

I personally put the midtown logo on it and make it look official because it actually is. If it feels professional they'll take it seriously. If you just pass them your wendy's napkin with a few tasks they're correctly probably not gonna be interested.

By just scheduling time to come by during the week, they're most likely ready to do something. They're not unwilling to serve. So as long as you do a good job with this next

part, they're probably gonna want to come on the team.

Like I said before, I personally like to have a term of commitment. It just makes it easier to commit to. Again, if they are thriving in the role and sustainably enjoying it we can always renew our term but a trial period is easier to initially commit to. A semester is pretty typical. A year is typical. And honestly with folks that are older, 2 year terms is not jarring. Two years for a college student is like an eternity though.

STEP 4: INVITE THEM THE RIGHT WAY

The last step I want to talk about is how to actually invite people.

So I'm face to face with the person and after we've talked some I ask a question that is very easy to say yes to. Something like, do you have any interest in a role like this? If they say yes, then I'll say in order to do this role what do you think a good schedule that would work for would look like? Or contextualize it to whatever the position is, I just like to ask them into their next step. Make it easy for them to walk into the commitment. And also tailor it to their schedule and ability. You want them thriving in it, not trying to force a square peg into a round hole.

There is a wrong way to ask this. Don't say no for them on their behalf. Remember we actually think this is beneficial to them and to the group. It's good for people to contribute and use gifts and grow stronger. You are not burdening them.

Here are 3 elements that I think are really important and necessary when inviting people to volunteer:

1. Speak into them about how you've seen God grow them

Luke, I have seen you grow so much over the past couple years. God has grown areas that were weak and it's been really neat to see and I know it's the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. Specifically, I have appreciated your courage to say what needs to be said and you regularly wanting to make sure we are in good standing. It's been really cool seeing you lead out in our friendship.

2. Narrate why this role is a good fit and is beneficial to them

In light of that I really want others to get to see this on display and copy you. Taking a role in helping lead our group would be a really amazing way to put on display how you've grown and for others to watch and copy. I think it would have a pretty incredible impact and help set a really healthy group culture.

3. (Lastly) make a reasonable request and then be quiet

For this last one a reasonable request is an important element. And it's pretty subjective so you're gonna have to use your discernment. It might be asking them to do the job for a specific period of time. But be mindful in some cases, asking for a 2 year commitment is not a reasonable request. Sometimes it is.

My experience is typically involving employment or internships so when I'm recruiting I usually ask people to submit an application as a reasonable request. Which really isn't a big ask for someone. You obviously won't do that for this because that is actually to little of a request for your context. But be mindful in what you are asking. Don't make the ask too large where it becomes a barrier to someone serving.

SUMMARY

Last nugget before my talk is done. Point #2 - "Say why it's good for them." Make sure you are well versed in explaining this. It is leadership currency. It is how we pay people. It's connecting the dots on why what they are doing matters. Say why it's good for them and why it's good for the group. Regularly. Often.

This needs to be your instinct as a leader. Whenever you see someone do something awesome. Don't just tell them great job, you're so great, you're the best. That may be true. But tell them why that's moving the needle in what your group is trying to accomplish. Why it's helping advancing the gospel and push back darkness in our city. All of our jobs are connected to that end. You as the leader, help your people see it.

What we talked about tonight is going to take your creativity to contextualize these steps and tips in your arena but I hope it to be helpful. In my experience what was outlined today has been very successful for myself and seen it be helpful to others as well. I wish you the best of success in your endeavors.