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A QUICK-ACCESS GUIDE TO  
TEN YOUTH MINISTRY ESSENTIALS

**SCOTTY GIBBONS**

# THE BIG TEN

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## CHAPTER 1

**LEADERSHIP****3 KEYS TO A GREAT  
RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LEADER****TOP TIP**

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*Make sure there's a clear understanding of how the lines of communication between you and your leader will flow on an ongoing basis.*

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**N**o man is an island.” The familiar adage applies to youth leaders, as well. You and your ministry exist within your local church. So it’s important to understand the role of student ministry in the context of your church’s overall mission. That starts with a shared understanding between you and your leader about your role and the role of the student ministry. I get that youth leaders are passionate about making a difference. You want to impact a school, change a community, reach a generation—take over the world! But most don’t get excited about serving their leader. However as a youth leader, this is your primary role.

God's Word tells us to serve our leaders as if we're serving the Lord. As you do, keep these three critical keys in mind.

## 1. DISCOVER YOUR LEADER'S VISION AND MAKE IT YOUR OWN.

- ***God has called you to a person, not a place.*** As a youth leader, you aren't primarily called to a city or a school or a particular group of students. First and foremost, God has called you to serve your leader.
- ***Find out what's important to your leader and make it important to you.*** Engage and ask questions to discover where God is leading your leader and look for ways you can come alongside him/her to advance that vision. Your job is to get on your leader's page—not to get the leader on yours. If you're unclear about your leader's priorities, ask him/her. Don't make assumptions.
- ***The goals of your student ministry should work in conjunction with the church's mission.*** Work together with your leader and his/her team to identify and develop the role the student ministry will play in the church and community—and how that role will support the overall vision of the church. When your ministry is competing with, rather than complementing, the big-picture mission, you're off base.

- ***God blesses your obedience, not your brilliance.***  
There will be times when you disagree with your leader. And there will be times you may very well be right. But unless it's illegal or unbiblical, defer to your leader's direction. God's blessing comes with unity and a heart of submission. So even when you feel like you have a "better" idea, inform the leader of your perspective and then submit to, and support, his/her decision.

## **2. WORK HARD AT COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR LEADER.**

- ***Communicate in a timely manner.*** Ideally, before even accepting your role as a youth leader, communicate clearly about your job description and what's expected of you. If you've already started, yet still don't have clarity on your role, call a time-out and have that conversation sooner than later. If you delay, the mist of confusion will become a fog of frustration. When sharing a weighty matter with your leader, be sensitive to the timing. Right before the pastor speaks is not the best time to bring up an issue. You'll just add to his/her stress load. Waiting an hour until after service ends is a great way to serve him/her.

- **Communicate consistently.** Make sure there's a clear understanding of how the lines of communication will flow on an ongoing basis. Does your leader prefer the bulk of your conversations to take place via email or face-to-face? Once a week or once a month? In the absence of conversation, misunderstandings abound.
- **Communicate honestly.** If you don't know how to handle a situation, admit it. Don't cave to the pressure of pretending you have it all together. Eventually, time will reveal you don't. Most leaders would rather you take five minutes to ask a question than two hours explaining to them why you made a bad decision. If you're feeling overwhelmed and seriously wondering if you can carry your current load of responsibilities, talk with your leader. Speaking up now will help avoid future burnout.
- **Communicate respectfully.** There will be times when the conversations will be difficult. Perhaps you feel frustrated. It's appropriate to be honest about that. But speak the truth—in love. If there's a disagreement, seek first to understand, and then to be understood. Honor always wins.

### 3. KEEP YOUR LEADER APPRISED OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE YOUTH MINISTRY—BOTH THE GOOD AND THE BAD.

- ***Celebrate the wins.*** Don't miss an opportunity to share a great report with your leaders. That's the stuff they're hoping and praying for in ministry.
- ***Tell your leader when there's a problem.*** It's human nature to want to share the highlights and hide the lowlights. In the long run, this kind of secrecy will work against you. Give your leader the opportunity to help problem-solve with you.
- ***Tell your leader about problems early on.*** Leaders don't like surprises. For example, if a problem involves a parent, let leadership hear about it from you—*before* hearing about it from the parent.



## ASK YOURSELF

1. *What does my leader want to see happen in the lives of students and the student ministry in our church? In our community? Be specific!*
2. *What does success and a healthy ministry look like in this particular church environment? How will I know when I've hit the mark?*
3. *What three to five things can I do to communicate more consistently, honestly, and respectfully with my leader?*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scotty Gibbons has been in youth ministry for more than twenty years and currently serves as the national youth strategist for the Assemblies of God National Leadership and Resource Center. He is the author of *Carry-On: Packing and Preserving for Success in Student Ministry*; *First Things First: A Devotional for Students*; and *Overflow: A Student's Guide to Living*.

Scotty loves doing life and ministry with his wife and best friend, Casey, and their six children, Candice, Kelly Grace, Bria, Allison, Angel, and Jordan.

For more information about Scotty Gibbons and his ministry, visit [scottygibbons.com](http://scottygibbons.com).

FOR MORE INFORMATION



*For more information about this book and other valuable resources visit [www.myhealthychurch.com](http://www.myhealthychurch.com)*

“This quick-access resource isn’t meant to address every challenge you’ll face in youth ministry, but my hope and prayer is that the field-tested, practical advice in the following pages will help you navigate the essentials—what I call the big ten! You’ll find that all of the principles in these pages can be easily understood and easily applied. Whether you’re a volunteer, a part-time youth leader, or a seasoned, full-time youth pastor, you’ll want to keep this helpful resource close and refer to it often.

You don’t need to go it alone. Let’s do this together! ”

—Scotty

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