What does it mean for you to do ministry in a team?
How is your ministry’s leadership team healthy?
In what ways do you contribute to its health?

Yolanda was a volunteer for two years. Key word: was. She was a quiet, committed leader who really loved her ninth-grade girls. There was just one problem—she didn’t agree with how our ministry was structured, and she didn’t want anything to do with the youth ministry outside of working with “her” girls.

She didn’t attend volunteer meetings, trainings, or even all-youth ministry fun events. Yolanda believed she knew what was best for her small group and wasn’t in need of outside input. She was very critical of the ministry’s leadership and spoke negatively about the direction of our ministry. Eventually, I spoke with Yolanda, asking her to change her attitude and actions regarding the ministry.

Unfortunately, she didn’t, and I had to ask her to step down from her leadership role. On the one hand, it was a tough decision—Yolanda really did love her girls and was an outstanding shepherd to her flock of sheep. But on the other hand, it was an easy decision because teamwork isn’t possible when personal agendas become more important than the common vision. How are you unlike Yolanda? (This is tougher: How might you be like her?)

First, who are lone-ranger volunteers? Simply put, they are people who believe that they know what’s best for the ministry and that their agenda is the one to follow. Honestly, it’s a lot easier to do ministry as a lone ranger. When you’re on your own, you have more freedom to do things “the right way”—which is usually just another way of saying your way.

A healthy youth ministry is built around a team of volunteers who believe in the ministry and are willing to set their personal agendas aside for the greater good of the ministry. It’s essential for a youth ministry to be led by people who want to support the ministry, actively participate in students’ lives, and genuinely contribute to meeting the needs within the church.

You can be that kind of volunteer in countless ways; here are just a few ways to strengthen your team play:

**Believe in the ministry vision.** It’s important for you to understand and believe in your ministry’s unified direction. Lone rangers tend to decide for themselves what they think is best for the ministry. But team players are passionate and excited about the ministry and where it’s headed. You might encounter a situation where you would do something different from the rest of the team, but by setting aside your personal agenda, you can contribute to the larger picture of what your team is accomplishing.

**Support the ministry.** Face it—decisions will be made that you won’t agree with. But this gives you a great opportunity for personal growth. Lone rangers take this as their cue to break away from the pack and do their own thing. But team players have the opportunity to help the team succeed instead of creating divisiveness. Your opinions and thoughts as a volunteer are very important to the team; however, humble leadership, spiritual maturity, and servanthood require you to willingly step away from yourself and support the team’s direction.

**Know your role.** Another way for you to be a team player is to understand your role in the ministry. Because your team is made up of different types of people with all kinds of passions and abilities, it’s important that everyone knows what they’re supposed to do. By understanding what’s expected of you, you’ll naturally increase your value to the team while maximizing the precious time you invest. It’s OK to define new roles for yourself in the ministry, especially if you see a strong need. But go for it in a way that isn’t destructive to team unity and leadership.

**Actively participate.** Students are hungry for attention, and caring adults (that’s you) can provide a piece of what students are looking for. Lone rangers miss out on some opportunities to minister to students. Team players participate. So, when it’s game time—play along. When it’s singing time—sing. When it’s time to toilet-paper the pastor’s house—buy the toilet paper and let the students do the work (of course). Basically, be a participant instead of a chaperone. Youth leaders decrease their value when they stand in the back of the room with arms folded scanning the crowd for problem students to reprimand.

All of these actions take intentional teamwork from youth leaders. My challenge to you is to consider ways that you may have been a lone ranger and discover how you can be the ultimate team player.
**Connect to God’s Word**

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” —Ephesians 4:16

- Think of two other people in your ministry who enable you to minister more effectively. Thank God for those people.
- What lone-ranger moments have you had? How can you better strengthen the youth ministry?

**Write a response and prayer to God here…**

**To the Point**
- Evaluate your contribution to your ministry team.
- Understand your role on the team.
- Be quick to support others and slow to pursue a selfish agenda.

**Try It**

Suggest to your lead youth worker that your leadership team kick off the school year (or new year, new semester, or new month) with a meeting that’s themed to reflect a certain sport or a favorite team. Ask if you (and another volunteer) can organize the details and help run the meeting. Arrange all the elements of a typical volunteer meeting around the “team theme.” For example:

- Have everyone come in a favorite team jersey.
- Create a sports trivia game, show sports bloopers, or play a movie clip of an emotional and inspirational coach’s speech.
- Distribute water bottles labeled with your youth ministry’s name, logo, or purpose statement.
- Take turns giving brief, coachlike pep talks on the value of team.
- Give everyone a ministry playbook (your why-we-do-what-we-do information).
- Get everyone “off the bench,” and assign specific roles.
- Have everyone set an individual and a team goal.

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