

Chapter 2: Requirements

Calling answers why you are drawn to serve students. Requirements answer who you must become and what you must learn to serve them well. If calling is a seed, requirements are the soil and the gardener's care—the conditions under which that seed can grow into a sturdy, fruitful tree. In youth ministry, your presence will often speak louder than your programs. Your character will preach before your sermon starts. Your spiritual life will overflow into the room, for good or for ill. This chapter clarifies the inner life and core competencies that form a trustworthy youth minister.

1) Character before competency

The first requirement of spiritual leadership is a life that is "above reproach."

Scripture paints a profile of sober-minded, faithful, self-controlled leaders whose homes, habits, and reputations align with their message (see 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). That doesn't mean perfection; it means integrity—wholeness—so that who you are in private and who you are in public are the same person. "Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life" (Proverbs 4:23). You cannot shepherd students toward holiness if you are casual with your own. Purity, honesty, gentleness, and faithfulness are not electives; they are prerequisites.

Character shows up in the small choices:

- Truth-telling when it costs you.
- Keeping confidences without hiding harm.
- Owning mistakes without excuse-making.
- Treating stress with prayer and rest rather than with secret escapes.
- Handling money with transparency and generosity.

John Bevere reminds us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Awe purifies ambition and keeps us from playing games with sin. When you tremble at God's Word, you stop looking for loopholes and start looking for likeness to Christ. Confession and repentance are not punishments; they are the pathway back to joy and power. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

2) Spiritual vitality: live what you invite students into

The most essential ministry strategy is abiding in Christ. "Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus says (John 15:5). Youth ministry requires energy, creativity, and patience, but none of these can substitute for a living connection with the Vine.

Build an honest, sustainable rule of life—habits that keep you near Jesus:

- Scripture: not only for teaching prep, but for feeding your soul. "Work hard so you can present yourself to God... one who correctly explains the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

- Prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. Keep a list of students and leaders and pray names, not just numbers.
- Sabbath and rest: receive God's gift of limits. "Come to me... and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28–29).
- Fasting: let hunger for God reorder lesser hungers.
- Community: spiritual friends and mentors who ask you real questions.

Bevere's emphasis on holy reverence will guard your devotional life from becoming a ritual devoid of relationship. Reverence births obedience; obedience keeps the channel of fellowship clear.

3) Relational credibility: trust is your first platform

Students follow leaders they trust. John Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership highlight that early influence rests at Level 2—Permission—where people follow because they want to, not because they have to. You earn that permission through consistent presence, empathy, and reliability. Learn names. Show up at games and performances. Ask questions and listen. Celebrate small wins. Keep your word, even about small things. Trust is slow to build and quick to lose.

Relational credibility extends to parents and volunteers. Communicate calendar plans early. Respond to messages in a timely, respectful way. Align with your senior leadership and keep them in the loop. Honor parents' role as primary disciple-makers by partnering, not competing—equip them with conversation guides after big teaching series, and invite their feedback.

Boundaries protect trust. Keep conversations with students observable and interruptible. Use the "two-adult rule" for meetings and transportation. Maintain appropriate physical and digital boundaries. Document pastoral care notes securely. These are not signs of suspicion; they are acts of wisdom that protect students, you, and the church.

4) Biblical and preaching competence: truth with clarity and grace

Youth workers handle Scripture in a way that is both faithful and accessible. Tony Evans emphasizes that our authority comes from God's Word empowered by the Spirit, not from our personalities. Aim for messages that are:

- Text-driven: the main point of the passage becomes the main point of the message.
- Christ-centered: lead students to Jesus, not just to moral advice.
- Clear and concrete: one big idea, a few memorable handles, and specific next steps.
- Pastoral: speak to real questions students face (identity, anxiety, temptation, friendship, technology) with biblical wisdom and compassion.

A simple pattern helps: Pray the text, explain the text, illustrate the text, apply the

text. Let Scripture interpret students' lives, not the other way around. Shepherd, don't show off. "Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage" (2 Timothy 4:2).

5) Leadership and management: lift the lid

Maxwell's Law of the Lid says your leadership capacity sets the ceiling of your ministry's impact. Youth ministry requires planning, prioritizing, and people development:

- Vision and priorities: define the win—disciples who know Jesus, belong to His people, and join His mission. Program your calendar to those outcomes, not to busyness.
- Systems: a simple follow-up pipeline for new students; a plan for small group placement; a clear pathway from first-time visitor to serving student.
- Teams: recruit, train, and empower volunteers. "Two people are better off than one" (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10). Build an inner circle that shares your values and complements your weaknesses.
- Communication: clear, multi-channel messaging to students, parents, and leaders. Over-communicate long before events.
- Stewardship: budget with integrity. Spend on disciple-making priorities. Track attendance and care contacts, not just for metrics but for shepherding.

The Law of Priorities reminds you that activity is not accomplishment. Do the first things first: prayer, people, preparation. The Law of the Inner Circle reminds you that those closest to you determine much of your potential—choose wisely.

6) Emotional health and resilience: lead from overflow, not from exhaustion

Ministry is joyful and weighty. You will carry stories of pain, walk with students through crisis, and absorb criticism. Unaddressed stress becomes a doorway to unwise coping. Build rhythms that sustain you: sleep, exercise, fun, spiritual friendship, and regular retreats. Normalize counseling and spiritual direction. Name what you're feeling and bring it to God and trusted people. "A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22), but that cheerfulness is not denial; it's the fruit of God's presence in an honest life.

Keep special attention on moral integrity in three areas:

- Sexual purity: flee temptation, guard your digital life, and invite accountability. "Run from sexual sin!" (1 Corinthians 6:18).
- Financial integrity: receipts, transparency, and church-approved systems for purchases and reimbursements.
- Speech: no sarcasm that shames, no gossip that erodes trust, no promises you can't keep. "Let everything you say be good and helpful" (Ephesians 4:29).

7) Cultural wisdom and safety

Students live in a digital world. Learn their platforms without trying to be a copy of

them. Teach digital discipleship—wisdom about identity, comparison, and time stewardship. Prepare your team for trauma-informed care: how to listen, how to recognize when to refer, and how to report appropriately. Know your church's policies for background checks, reporting abuse, transportation, medical forms, and medication handling. Safety is discipleship—students cannot hear the gospel well in unsafe environments. "Be sure that everything is done properly and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

8) Alignment with the church and a learner's posture

Youth ministry is a ministry of the church, not a church within the church. Align your mission, teaching, and calendar with your leaders. Seek regular feedback. "Let the wise listen and become even wiser" (Proverbs 1:5). Teach students to love the whole church—multi-generational worship, service, and membership. You are preparing them not just for youth group, but for a lifetime with Jesus and His people.

Requirements can feel heavy until you remember the order of grace: Jesus invites you to abide, and then He empowers you to obey. The Spirit who calls you also forms you. Your job is not to manufacture holiness or competence, but to cooperate with God's forming work—daily, humbly, joyfully. Build the trellis, and the Vine will grow.

Weekly Challenge (Week 2: Requirements)

- Day 1: Character and integrity audit
- In prayer, review 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. Journal honest reflections on where your life aligns and where it needs strengthening. Share one growth area with a mentor and ask for specific accountability for the next 30 days.
- Day 2: Rule of life
- Draft a simple weekly rhythm for Scripture, prayer, Sabbath, community, exercise, and rest. Block it on your calendar. Share it with a friend who will check in weekly for a month.
- Day 3: Safety and ethics plan
- Write a one-page safety plan that includes the two-adult rule, communication guidelines, transportation procedures, reporting protocol, and social media boundaries. Review it with your pastor.
- Day 4: Leadership lab
- Identify two potential volunteer leaders. Schedule brief conversations to hear their stories, share vision, and invite them into specific roles. Draft a simple role description and a 60-day onboarding plan.
- Day 5: Preaching practicum
- Choose a short passage. Craft one big idea, two supporting points, and one clear next step for students. Write a 600–800 word manuscript or detailed outline. Deliver an 8–10 minute talk to a trusted adult and ask for feedback on clarity, faithfulness, and relevance.

Deliverables to bring into Week 3

- A one-page character growth plan and accountability partner's name.
- Your weekly rule of life.
- Your written safety and ethics plan.
- Two role descriptions and onboarding plans for volunteers.
- A sermon outline or manuscript with feedback notes.

Next Week Preview (Week 3: Responsibilities)

With calling clarified and requirements in view, we'll move into the everyday work of a youth minister. We'll map weekly rhythms and core responsibilities: preaching and teaching, small groups, pastoral care and follow-up, parent partnership, volunteer development, outreach and missions, and administration. You'll design a 90-day ministry rhythm that aligns with your church's mission and the discipleship outcomes you seek.