



# 1:3:1 Leadership Coaching Tool

Empower people. Solve real problems. Stay out of the weeds.

## Overview

Pastors and ministry leaders often feel stuck between two unhealthy extremes: micromanaging every detail of a decision or checking out entirely in the name of empowerment. Both approaches short-circuit growth, for the leader and the team.

*The 1:3:1 framework offers a better way.*

It creates a coaching space that fosters clarity, ownership, and creative problem-solving without requiring the leader to do all the thinking or all the work. It's especially helpful for equipping staff, volunteers, and emerging leaders to grow in discernment and leadership, while still honoring the vision and values of the church.

This tool helps:

- Avoid bottlenecks around the senior leader
- Create healthy delegation and decision-making rhythms
- Train others to lead wisely within ministry constraints
- Foster a discipleship culture where people own problems and act on solutions

Whether you're leading a church staff, a ministry volunteer, or a young adult small group, this tool invites meaningful dialogue, sharpens problem-solving instincts, and builds leadership muscles.

## THE 1:3:1 FRAMEWORK

One problem | Three possible solutions | One recommended path

### Step 1: Identify the 1 Problem:

Most people aren't solving the wrong problem; they just haven't named the right one yet.

Help the person slow down and clearly **name the core issue**. This often takes digging beneath symptoms or frustrations to get to the root.

Key coaching questions:

- What is the actual problem you're trying to solve?
- How would you describe it in a single sentence?
- Who else sees this as a problem, and why?
- What outcome would signal that this is resolved?

Ministry example:

Instead of "The youth group just isn't growing," reframe the problem as: "We haven't yet identified a relational strategy that consistently invites new students to engage."

## Step 2: Offer 3 Possible Solutions

Brainstorming creates ownership. Without options, you're just venting.

Now it's time to invite them into creative ownership. You're not the fixer. Let them explore **three different paths** toward a solution. These can be imperfect, experimental, or even combined later.

Key coaching questions:

- What are 3 different ways this could be addressed?
- What's a short-term action vs. long-term strategy?
- What would be the simplest move? The boldest?
- What have you seen others try that might work here?

Ministry example:

For the youth invite problem, three solutions could be:

1. Launch a monthly "bring a friend" night with giveaways.
2. Start a core student leader team who own personal invites.
3. Equip adult volunteers to coach students in inviting their friends.

## Step 3: Make 1 Recommendation

Clarity beats consensus. Someone has to own the next step.

The final step builds decisiveness. It requires the person to evaluate their options, weigh pros and cons, and present a path forward. This isn't just "about picking the "best" solution, it's about committing to **one actionable step** and articulating why.

Key coaching questions:

- Which of the three feels most feasible and aligned with our values?
- What makes this the strongest option on balance?
- What's your plan for implementation?
- What support do you need from me?

Ministry example:

"I'd recommend starting with the student leader team. It's relational, scalable, and fits our discipleship model. I'll draft a leadership invite this week and meet with three students by Friday."

## How to Use this Tool in Real Ministry:

- Use it in weekly 1:1s with staff or interns.
- Use it as a discussion template for team meetings.
- Teach it in leadership development cohorts.
- Keep a copy near your desk as a coaching cheat sheet.
- Use it in elder meetings to create shared ownership.