

Ministry to Women ~ It Matters.
Helping Women Worship, Grow,
Connect, Serve, and Share!

Women's Ministry

5 Keys for Effective Growth

Arkansas Baptists Women's Ministry



INTRODUCTION

Arkansas Baptists Women's Ministry developed a set of resources specifically for training and equipping women who serve in local churches across the state. The resources introduce five basic keys to establishing an effective plan for ministering to women, then builds upon this foundation with varying levels of growth. The keys are ***Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, and Share***. These keys not only provide a guide for planning, they also provide an evaluative tool in the planning process. A fully developed ministry plan should incorporate all five keys and challenge women in the local church to take part in all of them.

Our goal as women who lead in the local church is to help train, equip, disciple, encourage, and cultivate women who are thriving in their relationship with God, with family, with friends, within the church, and spreading into their communities and world. It is the hope of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention that this resource will serve as a helpful tool in establishing and growing a ministry to women that challenges women to carry out the Great Commission. Our greatest calling as women who lead in the local church is to love Christ as we lead others to know Christ, to follow His commands, and to share the good news with a world who desperately needs to know His love and grace.

Foundational Components: Ministry to Women in the Local Church

Ministry to women exists to fulfill the purpose of the local church, which is the carrying out of the Great Commission. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

The fuel for effective ministry to women is the Great Commandment. *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* (Mark 12:30-31.) A great summary of these verses is that we should always strive to **love God and love others**.

Ministry to women is one of the most effective ways to love and serve women with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many benefits to a fully developed ministry program in your local church.

- There is spiritual and numerical growth.
- Women feel accepted especially if they are single, divorced, or have a spouse who will not attend church.
- Doors are opened to meaningful relationships.
- Women are encouraged to discover, develop, and use their spiritual gifts.
- Vision and networking are provided for both church and community ministries.
- Spiritually older women are encouraged to mentor younger women.
- Jesus’ example of ministry to and with women is followed.
- Women are helped to fight spiritual battles.
- Families are affected as women’s lives are drawn closer to Christ.

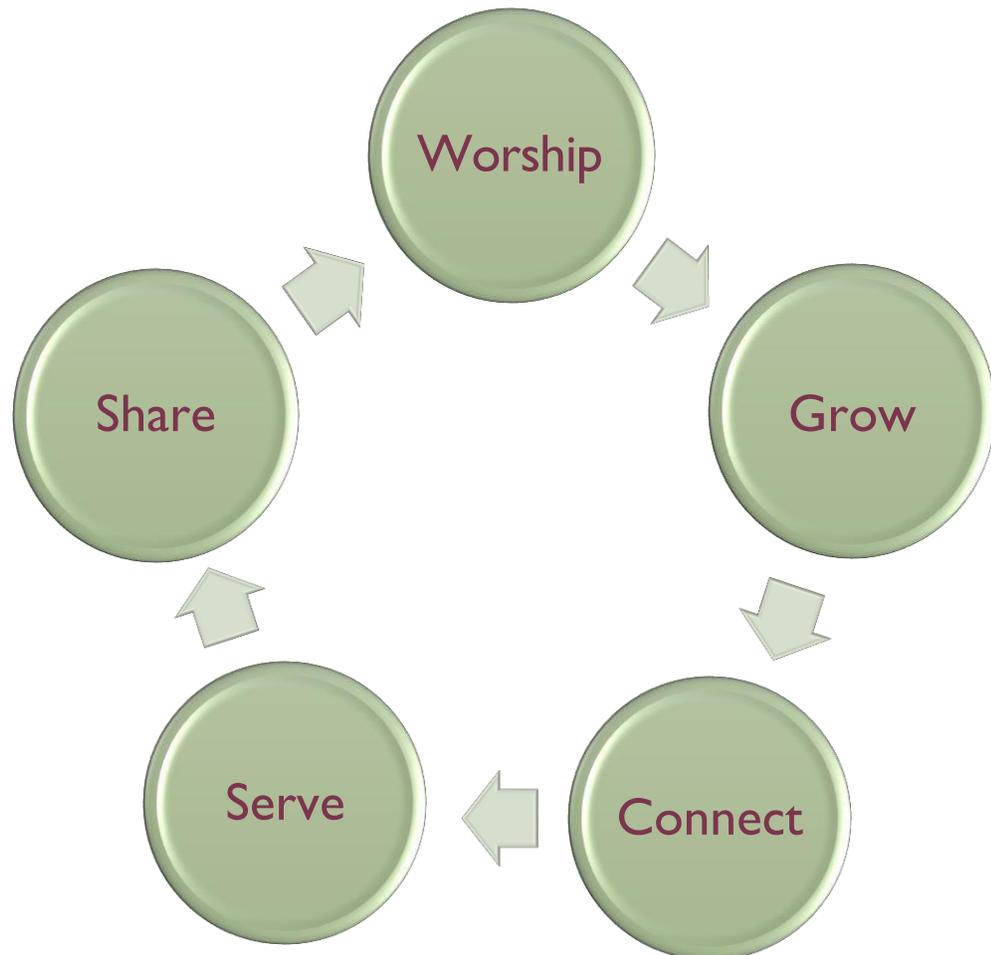
Ministry to women leads to women who are loved, reached, encouraged, engaged, and empowered. When ministry to women is fully developed the following outcomes will happen:

- **Salvation:** Women are coming to faith in Christ.
- **Spiritual Growth:** Women are growing in their love relationship with Christ.
- **Inspired:** Women are embracing their God-given roles in the home, church, and community.
- **Trained and Empowered:** Women are serving in the local church and making kingdom impact at home and around the world.

Foundational Component 1: Ministry to Women Begins with a Strong Biblical Foundation.

An effective women's ministry leader must understand the foundational, biblical elements for ministry to women and be able to create a ministry plan based on all of them. Finding a way to balance the foundational elements equally is essential to ministry success. The foundational elements include:

- WORSHIP** Draws our hearts near to God.
- GROW** Draws our minds to the Word.
- CONNECT** Draws us near to each other in community.
- SERVE** Draws us together in service and outreach.
- SHARE** Draws others in our world to Jesus.



When we begin to understand why we have ministry to women, and why it matters to kingdom growth in the local church, we can see that it all starts with a healthy understanding of who God is. It all begins with **WORSHIP**: setting our minds on the Lord and His work in our life. When we **WORSHIP**, we begin to **GROW** in relationship to God and His Word, which naturally leads us to **CONNECT** in spiritual growth and community with each other. A natural outflow of growing deeper together causes us to see the needs around us and come together to **SERVE**. When we serve in Jesus' name, we will naturally have a desire to **SHARE** Jesus' name and His love in our homes and communities. And in a spiritually healthy women's ministry, all of these components lead us back to **WORSHIP**. Ministry that glorifies God is a continual outflow of **Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, & Share**.

Let's take a closer look at each foundational element.

WORSHIP: Draws our Hearts Near to God

The Bible says that we are to, *"Exalt the Lord our God; worship at His footstool! Holy is He."* Psalm 99:5 (ESV) When we worship, we:

- Focus on who God is and see ourselves in perspective to who He created us to be.
- Experience a change in our focus, values, priorities, and outlooks. When this occurs, an eternal view of life is embraced, rather than a temporary view.
- Meet women at their greatest point of need by providing an avenue for them to connect with God so that He can refresh their hearts and minds.
- Encourage women to be still and know that God is God. (Psalm 46:10)

GROW: Draws our Minds to the Word

The Bible says, *"All Scripture is breathed out by God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* 1 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) When we grow in God's Word, we:

- Understand that spiritual growth will not occur in a woman's life without a consistent intake of the Bible.
- Embrace God's Word as our foundation for life

CONNECT: Draws us Near each other in Community

The early church in the book of Acts provides a great example of connecting with each other in meaningful ways. *“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”* Acts 2:46-47 (NIV) When we connect, we

- Embrace the fact that women are relational and need to experience the love and support that comes from other women. When they do, women are loved, challenged, accepted, valued, and supported. In many churches today, women feel disconnected or overlooked.

SERVE: Draws us Together in Service and Community Ministry

“...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28 (ESV) When we serve, we:

- Follow Jesus’ example. Service and mission projects done in love and with a focus on Jesus, lead to open doors for the gospel to be shared.
- Become the hands and feet of Jesus to a lost and dying world. This helps women to step outside the walls of our church (as well as their comfort zone) and portray the love of Jesus.

SHARE: Draws others in our World to Jesus

“But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) When we share, we:

- Believe that God places people in our lives for the purpose of sharing His good news! This takes us back to the reason we have ministry to women in the first place: to carry out Jesus’ command in the Great Commission. Women need to be prepared and excited about sharing the good news of Jesus with their family, friends, coworkers, and people they meet!

Foundational Component 2: Ministry to Women is Developed and Sustained by Prayer

Prayer is crucial to the development and ongoing effectiveness of ministry to women. As leaders, we need clear direction from the Lord. We don't know the deep spiritual needs in the lives of the women we serve. Thankfully, God knows the needs and faithfully guides us through His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. Daily we can seek the Lord for clear direction and ask Him to move so that spiritual outcomes like salvation, spiritual growth, training, and empowerment occur in the lives of women. These outcomes only happen as God leads and moves among His people.

In the planning process, we need to understand that women are busier than ever. Their time and focus are stretched thin with daily tasks. As a result, leaders need to be cautious about making plans without a concentrated time of prayer. For example, planning an event for the sake of planning an event can hinder the growth of the ministry. We are constantly building trust with the women we serve. When we plan without the Lord's direction, we make the ministry process more difficult because we spend time, energy, and resources on human efforts that never produce long-lasting outcomes. Please don't let this thought intimidate you! God is faithful and gracious to us in every way. However, the reality remains the same. As leaders, we are desperately dependent on God to give us His vision and direction. As we abide in Christ, and His Word abides in us, spiritual fruit will be produced, and the Father will be glorified. (John 15)

Prayer involves both talking to God and listening for His reply. The Bible talks about a life that prays without ceasing. How can we do that as leaders? We do that by talking to God daily and seeking His clear direction. As you watch for His move and join Him, you will be encouraged as the Lord becomes the leader in your ministry to women.

Daily ask the Lord to guide by providing:

- Clear direction for the purpose and direction of the ministry.
- Spiritual and relational hunger among the women in your church and community.
- Spiritual outcomes including women coming to faith in Christ, women growing in their love relationship with Christ, women embracing their God-given roles in the home, church, and community.
- Creativity in the planning process and the ability to think outside of the box.
- Fellow leaders who are passionate about the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Spiritual strongholds to be broken in the life of your church, women, and community.

Foundational Component 3: Ministry to Women Develops Over Time and is Connected to the Overall Purpose of the Church

Are you feeling overwhelmed? If so, take heart! Ministry to women should develop slowly and organically as God leads. This means that while ministry to women in your local church will have some similar components as other local church ministries, it will not look the same. Why? Because the Lord is faithful to uniquely lead in your ministry context. Leadership really is a spiritual journey that helps us mature in our relationship with God and others.

Ministry to women in the local church is an extension of the work God is doing in and through the local body of believers. One of the most important individuals to talk to as you develop the ministry plan is your pastor. He should be an advocate for the ministry. Ask him for input on how ministry to women can play a vital role in the life of the church. If your pastor and staff are not on board, stop and pray. Ask God to change the situation. Sometimes slowing down or taking small steps so that trust can be built lays a strong foundation for the future. Always remember that we are members of the body of Christ. We function best when we work together. God has appointed the pastor to lead, guide, and serve the church. Ministry to women is one aspect of the larger body and functions at its highest level of effectiveness when working within the mission and vision of the church.

Helpful questions to ask your pastor include:

- “How can our women’s ministry help the mission and the vision of the church move forward?”
- “What are some things you would like to see the women in the church do to help build unity among our body of believers?”
- “What are some ways women can help love and serve people beyond the walls of our church?”

During the conversation, share your desire to help the women in your church:

- Worship: Draws our hearts near to God.
- Grow: Draws our minds to the Word.
- Connect: Draws us near to each other in community.
- Serve: Draws us together in service and community ministry.
- Share: Draws others in our world to Jesus.

Conclusion

A ministry plan grounded in a strong biblical foundation, an effective prayer life, and consistent support from the pastor paves the way for a thriving ministry to women. Spiritual outcomes will occur as women's lives are touched and changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you are not sure where to start in the ministry process, look at the ***Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, Share*** model. Pick one area of the model and help the women in your local church focus on that area. As momentum grows, add another area. Before long, you will have a fully developed ministry to women!

Phase 1: Starting a Women's Ministry

Are you ready to begin a ministry to women? The women in your church and community will be blessed as they grow in their love relationship with Jesus and others. Women's ministry can take on different forms in the local church. It can be as simple as a Bible study group or as complex as a fully developed ministry program. It can develop at a steady pace and change over time in order to meet the evolving needs of women as well as the direction of the church. Women's ministry offers an avenue for women to worship, grow, connect, serve, and share— together! Below are keys steps to starting a ministry to women.

Step 1: Select a Leader and Leadership Team.

Women's Ministry Leader/Director

The women's ministry leader may have expressed a sense of calling or may be recruited based on observable gifts and passions. The leader needs to:

- Have a passion for Jesus.
- Be organized.
- Be able to cast vision.
- Lead a core group of fellow leaders in implementing the vision.
- Be trusted by the women in the church.

Once the leader is selected you can begin to develop the leadership team. Developing a women's ministry team is an exciting step in the formation process. During this step, you will see God work in a mighty way to bring the right leaders to serve. The team should be made up of gifted and called women who love Jesus and have a heart for serving other women. The team needs to have a variety of age ranges represented as well as different spiritual giftings.

Women's Ministry Leadership Team

The women's ministry leadership team may include *some* of the following roles, *all* of these roles, or other roles as needed to reach the women in your church and community:

Worship/Prayer Leader:

- Passionate about spiritual leadership.
- A prayer warrior for the ministry.
- Understands the value of personal and corporate worship and will help plan events so that worship (connecting to God through prayer and praise) is always included.

Grow/Bible Study Leader:

- Passionate about God's Word.
- Plans Bible studies that will help the women of the church grow in their knowledge and application of God's Word to their daily lives.

Connect/Event Leader:

- Passionate about community and connecting women with each other in meaningful ways.
- Plans large group, small group, and one on one opportunities for the women in the church to meet together in authentic ways so that they can share life.

Serve/Ministry Project Leader:

- Passionate about ministry projects that take place outside the walls of the church. • Has a heart for people who do not know Jesus and who struggle with having their basic physical needs met.
- Works hard to connect the ministry projects to the gospel so that physical and spiritual needs are met.

Share/Outreach Leader:

- Passionate about telling women about Jesus and motivating others to share their faith story.
- Finds creative ways to encourage the women in the church to live “On Mission” for Jesus.
- An advocate for mission work that is happening at home and around the world.

Promotional/Publicity Leader:

- Passionate about communication and gifted in the area of informing women about events and opportunities that are available through women’s ministry.
- Able to navigate the world of social media, has a good grasp of graphics and communication skills.

Hospitality/Event Decor Coordinator:

- Passionate about providing a pleasing aesthetic feel to events and space.
- Able to come up with a plan that follows the budget.
- Gifted in creativity, planning, budgeting, and decorating.

Job Descriptions: Each role should have a defined job description that clearly communicates the tasks that need to be completed for ministry success. You can use the brief descriptions above and add additional details to make the description suitable for your needs. Women are more inclined to step into ministry opportunities when the expectations of the role are clearly defined, and ministry steps are listed.

Step 2: Create a Purpose Statement.

Once your team is assembled, you are ready to set direction for the ministry. Prayer is vital in every step.

- A purpose statement tells the women in your church what the ministry is about. The purpose statement should be easy to remember and easily recited. In a sense, the purpose statement is a promise to your women as well as an indicator of the focus of the ministry.
- The purpose statement can connect to the church's overall purpose statement. Some women's ministries take the church's purpose statement and adopt it for their ministry. Other women's ministries take the heart of the church's purpose statement into consideration and then develop a unique statement for themselves.
- Keep the purpose statement short, simple, to the point, and relational. The purpose statement should always be connected to the Bible. (Make sure you can remember it and state it when asked!)
- When developing the purpose statement, ask the questions, "Who are we and what are we about?"
- The purpose statement should influence all the activities and plans of the ministry. The leadership team should filter plans through the purpose statement and the church's mission in order to stay aligned with the overall purpose of the church.

Step 3: Cast a Vision for Ministry among the Women in Your Church.

- Begin to spread the news: "God is moving among our women. You have chance to be part of this move of God. Look for upcoming opportunities to be involved!"
- Share Women's Ministry "victories" from other churches or past experiences. Start a Facebook page or an email distribution list for the women in your church. Think of the best ways to create a "community" so your women can begin to gather and live life together. If technology is not your thing, plan a casual meeting with the women in your church to talk about potential ministry direction and how God is moving. Keep things simple and relational.
- Be open to new ideas as you dream about the possibilities of reaching women both inside your church and living in your community.
- Capture the name of anyone who has a passion for serving in women's ministry. Watch for ways that God is working among the women in your church. You may discover additional leadership team members via this vision casting step.

Network Within: Talk to key women in your church. Identify at least one key leader per age group. Ask them for their input on the need for a women’s ministry. Ask them,

- “What do you see God doing in the area of women’s ministry?”
- “Have you been involved in women’s ministry in the past? If so, what are some success stories?”
- “How can women’s ministry be an effective tool in our church and community?” (Think of this time as a brainstorm session. Begin to dream and ask God to show you His plan during the process.)
- “Are you willing and excited about helping in the development process”?

Network Beyond: Talk to other women’s ministry leaders in your community and association. Find out what is going on in the area of women’s ministry. Be sure and connect with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Women’s Ministry Network Group in your area. A list of area leaders is provided in the appendix section. A statewide Facebook Group is also available via the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Check with the network leader for details. Ask them,

- “What is working in the area of women’s ministry in our state and association?”
- “Are there women’s ministry pitfalls to avoid?”

Step 4: Conduct a Survey.

Compile a survey for the women in your church that will help you to identify needs so that you can prayerfully and purposefully plan. An example of a survey is provided in the appendix section.

- There are many benefits to a survey:
 - Provides ownership among the women in your church.
 - Identifies the greatest need(s).
 - Helps to gauge interest.
 - Builds excitement about the ministry.
- Promote the survey church-wide and invite every woman to participate.
- Compile the survey results and use them in your planning process. Utilizing the results in your planning process will help to build trust and ownership among the women because it demonstrates that all the women in the church will play a vital role in the direction of the women’s ministry.

Step 5: Prepare and Plan.

- Create a yearly calendar of events and ministry opportunities for the women in your church. Planning a yearly calendar will help you to be balanced in your ministry approach. This is especially true if you evaluate your year and ask the question, “Are we helping our women to worship, grow, connect, serve, and share with our yearly schedule of events?” Preparing and planning will help the ministry to avoid focusing on one aspect of ministry to the exclusion of others. Be sure to plan different types of opportunities for your women.
- Create a yearly budget for your ministry. Ministry requires money and you will need funds to minister to the women in your church and community. A sample conference/retreat budget is provided in the appendix section.
- As you plan, think about the different life stages: single, young moms, professionals, empty nesters, senior adults, etc. In the beginning, you may want to plan opportunities that will meet the needs of women no matter their age or life stage. Once the ministry is growing, you can begin to explore ideas for expanding the ministry to meet the unique needs in the different age groups and life stages.

Step 6: Promote and Publicize.

- Promote your women’s ministry in a variety of ways. Strive to cast vision, communicate opportunities, and enlist women to help you in the development process. Use the following communication outlets to let the women know about the things taking place via women’s ministry:
 - Church newsletter and bulletin
 - Sunday morning announcements
 - Personal invitations through Sunday School and Bible studies, and invite cards
 - Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, blog, Instagram and church website
 - Mailings including postcard and email
 - Bulletin boards

Step 7: Strategically Launch the Ministry

- Plan a kick-off event and invite the women from your church and community. This event will introduce the women to the ministry and set the tone for how women's ministry will bless and enrich the lives of the women. A few examples include: a luncheon, weekend retreat, one-day conference, or drop-in event on the weekend or a week night.
- At the event, allow for "getting to know you time" as well as time to share about the ministry. Consider having information available that showcases opportunities for the year. You can print off and give the women the yearly calendar of events. This will help the women know that the women's ministry is serious about having an ongoing presence at the church. You may want to unveil the name of your ministry as well as the purpose statement. This is a fun time that builds excitement among your women. Be sure to have sign-up sheets so that you can capture the names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses for the women who attend.
- Be intentional and plan a "next step" that you can promote at the launch event. For example, while hosting a retreat or conference, promote the next event, Bible study, or mission project. Your goal at the kick-off event is to build momentum so that the ministry can continue to grow and move forward. The kick-off event needs to "kick-off" opportunities for your women to worship, grow, connect, serve, and share—together!

Step 8: Evaluate.

- Evaluation should be an on-going process in your women's ministry planning. Evaluating each event provides direction for future planning because the women's ministry team is able to identify areas of success and areas for improvement. Evaluation helps your women's ministry stay in step with how God is moving and with the direction of the church.
- Be willing to try new things and know that it is okay to fail. Just like in life, some things work, and some things do not. When you offer an event or ministry opportunity and the women in your church do not respond to it, keep moving forward. Learn a lesson or two and start planning the next opportunity for your women.
- Invite the women to have a voice in the evaluation process. Ask for their feedback when it is appropriate. In your ministry development process, it is helpful to have feedback when appropriate. Be sure and use the feedback you receive. Timing is important in this step. If you ask too early, it may confuse the process. If you ask for too late, it may frustrate the follower. If you ask for it and do not use it, you may lose trust.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time for your church as you implement the women's ministry vision and begin to minister to the women God brings to your church. Remember it is all about the Great Commission to go and make disciples by telling the good news of Jesus!

Phase 2: Growing a Women’s Ministry

Ministry to women usually falls in the category of healthy and growing or declining and struggling. Like life, ministry can move back and forth between the two. Thankfully, steps can be taken from either ministry place so continual growth can occur. The Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, and Share model offers opportunities for continual growth as we develop our relationship with God and community with each other.

You know it’s time to focus on growing your ministry to women when the following things are happening in your local church setting:

1. **Growing from a healthy place:** The ministry has a strong biblical foundation and the team is functioning well together. God is moving among your women and there is a desire to go deeper in their relationship with God and community with each other. When this happens, it’s time to take steps of faith so the ministry can continue to grow.
2. **Growing from a declining place:** The ministry seems to be struggling and complacency is apparent among the women. There is an overall lack of commitment and direction. Maybe a few women are doing all the work and feeling frustrated. As a result, there is a lack of effectiveness and focus. This leads to a lack of growth among your women.

<p>Healthy Ministries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead women to a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God and others.• Lead women to take part in God’s eternal purposes in “everyday” ways.• Lead women to demonstrate spiritual fruit as they embrace their callings.	<p>Declining Ministries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead women to focus exclusively on one aspect of ministry (spiritual enrichment, community/fun, service or mission projects) to the exclusion of others.• Lead women to focus on temporary things rather than connecting life to the Gospel.• Lead women to accept the status quo as life and ministry are predictable, routine, and safe.
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Growing from a Healthy Place

Often churches who have walked through Phase 1 are healthy and ready to grow. A healthy ministry can and will grow as a deeper focus on each aspect in the Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve and Share model is implemented. This leads to women who are growing in their relationship with God and community with each other. The model not only aids you in the planning process, but also serves as an evaluative tool. A fully developed ministry plan should incorporate all five keys and challenge women in the local church to take part in all of them.

Worship: How are the hearts of women growing near to God?

- Prioritize meaningful times of prayer and praise at ministry events so women can slow down and remember God's love and plan for their lives.
- Provide an example of worship to women and encourage them to incorporate times of prayer and praise in their daily routine.

Grow: How are the minds of women growing in God's Word?

- **Challenge women to grow in their love, knowledge, and proper application of God's Word.**
 - Offer introductory studies with a plan to move women towards studies with more spiritual depth.
 - Challenge women to focus on learning who God is as opposed to who is God to me?
 - Grasp that women need to be taught how to study the Bible for transformation. Therefore, we gather women in groups and encourage questions like, "what does this passage say about God, what does this passage mean in its original context, and how can the Holy Spirit apply this truth to my life?"
- **Consider the overall Bible study strategy of the church and seek to work with the pastor or minister of education/discipleship to connect the women's ministry studies to the overall direction of the church.**
 - Women gathering together around God's Word is a beautiful thing, however, women can get comfortable in their routine. Breaking up the routine can happen as we offer studies addressing varying needs in a woman's life, challenge women to go deeper in scriptural passages and memory work, and by utilizing studies written by different authors.
 - Stay informed on studies offered through LifeWay, She Reads Truth, Proverbs 31, and other resources.
 - A Lending Library is available through the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Studies can be checked out at no cost to you. Contact the ABSC for information.

Connect: How are women growing deeper in community with each other?

- Offer opportunities for meaningful relationships to develop between women in their age group as well as women in differing age groups.
- Create an atmosphere where everyone has a place to belong. This requires purposeful steps to avoid the development of cliques and power groups. One way to address power groups is by offering new opportunities for different women to get involved. Keeping an eye on this pitfall is essential or your ministry to women will suffer. Ask other key leaders to help in the process by finding new women, befriending them, and helping them get connected. It's important to create and maintain an atmosphere that is inviting for new connections to be made and established connections to be celebrated.
- Understand that women need to gather in at least three different "connect" settings within the church:
 - **Large Group Setting:** This is a time when all the women in your church gather together. Some ideas for large group meetings include paint parties, dessert fellowships, retreats, conferences, table conversations, and banquets. These connect opportunities offer meaningful times where all the women in your church can gather for a time of fun so that they can develop relationships, be encouraged, and be equipped in their walk with God.
 - **Small Group Setting:** This is a time when age graded or life stage groups gather for fellowships or small group Bible studies. This smaller connect setting provides a time for deeper, more meaningful relationships to develop. Spiritual conversations can center on relevant issues like marriage, parenting, empty nest, singles, working moms, etc.
 - **One-on-One Setting:** Some of the most meaningful connections in your church between women will happen in mentor relationships. This occurs when an older woman and a younger woman meet together for the purpose of prayer support, accountability, and Bible study.

Serve: How are women growing together in service and outreach?

- Assess the needs in our community and look for ways to meet tangible needs so that a bridge is built for sharing the gospel or inviting unchurched people to church. It is important to be Spirit led in this process so that your ministry project opens doors to share the good news of Jesus.

- Take steps to complete a ministry project as a group and with kingdom impact. This occurs as we:
 - Select a ministry project.
 - Recruit key leaders to help.
 - Cast a vision by sharing the need with the women in our church.
 - Promote, Promote, Promote!
 - Provide training if needed.
 - Complete the service project together.
 - Celebrate the victories! Always let the women, as well as the church, know how the Lord worked and moved during the project. Celebrating the victories will build momentum for the next project.

Share: How are women growing in their faith stories?

- Make it our goal to help women know how to share their faith story. We can keep it simple and relational by asking women to write down their stories focusing on life before they met Jesus, how they met Jesus, and how their lives have changed since meeting Jesus. It is so exciting to know we can encourage women to know their story, own their story, and share their story!
- Teach women that the opportunities to share are right here at home and all over the world.

Practical “Share” Strategies

- **At Church:**
 - Teach women how to share their faith story. Encourage them to ‘practice’ with each other!
 - Give women opportunities to tell their success “share” stories at women’s ministry events. Celebrate how God is at work through the gospel!
 - Pray for the people your women are sharing the gospel with. Be discreet in this process and always honor the people and families who are involved in the evangelism process.
- **In the Community:**
 - Look for ways that God is at work in your community and strive to build relationships that provide an opportunity to share the gospel. Start by focusing on the people you have met through your ministry project, who do not know Jesus or attend church. Build relationships with the goal of sharing the message of Jesus.
- **All Over the World:**
 - Promote mission opportunities by spotlighting an upcoming trip, praying for missionaries and specific people groups, and collecting supplies for mission trips.
 - Challenge women to give sacrificially to mission work through Cooperative Program giving, mission offerings and individual mission support for team members.
 - Plan a mission trip for the women of your church. Invite women to give input in planning and then go on the mission trip together. It will be fun to see the incredible opportunities women have to share their faith.

Growing from a Declining Place

Barriers to the growth process can revolve around challenges women face. Other times, the barriers revolve around church related issues like a lack of vision by the ministry team or complacency among the women. Recognizing the barriers women face helps us get real about the challenges occurring in our ministry settings.

Barriers Women Face

- Women are busier than ever.
- Women place the needs of others before their own.
- Poor Childcare or no Childcare is offered at Bible Studies and Events.
- Only a few women are involved in planning process resulting in a lack of ownership by all women.
- Status Quo: Everything is predictable.
- One age group is targeted to the exclusion of others or the leadership team is made up of one age group.
- Real needs are not being met.
- Overemphasis on one aspect of Women's Ministry resulting in a lack of ministry balance.
- Lack of vision, planning, and leadership development.
- Lack of meaning and purpose.

Thankfully we can address issues like these so that changes can be made, and growth can happen. It's exciting to know that mundane ministry is not God's plan! A few key changes can position the ministry to grow as a fresh move of God results in deeper relationships with God and community with each other.

Step 1: Pray for Revival.

- The women in your church are most likely overwhelmed with life. They may be busy, over committed, or simply "tired" of playing church. As a result, the women need a fresh move of God's Spirit in and through their lives.
- Pray for:
 - Spiritual awakening among women, families, church, and community.
 - Repentance of Sin: A deep sorrow for "playing" the church game, unconfessed sin, check-list Christianity, over commitment, people pleasing, and complacency.
 - God given desire to live according to the Bible and for God's eternal purposes.
 - Fresh ideas that will allow you and your team to reach the women in your church and community

Step 2: Evaluate the Leadership Team.

Look at the make-up of your team. Ask these important questions:

- Are there women of varying ages? In order to reach all the women in your church, it is best to have all age groups in your church represented on the team. As you add different ages to the leadership team, seek out the key leaders who are women of influence.
- Are there women with varying spiritual gifts? For your team to function properly, you need a blend of people with different types of spiritual gifts (and personalities) working together. You can use a spiritual gift or personality inventory to identify your current leaders' giftings.
- Who are the new leaders that can provide fresh ideas? As you walk in step with the Spirit, He will raise up leaders who need to serve in leadership. These leaders should fill in the gaps regarding age and gifting. Watch for key leaders to emerge as God leads!
- Who are the existing leaders that can provide wisdom and continuity? Most likely, there are current leaders involved in the ministry who need to remain in leadership in order to provide wisdom and direction. Utilize these key leaders as a treasured resource. They have years of wisdom and experiences in their collective lives.

Identify the right people and take the necessary steps to invite them to serve. Before you make any changes to your current ministry plan, get the right people serving in the right places!

Step 3: Update the Purpose Statement.

- Go back to the drawing board with the purpose statement.
- What elements of the purpose statement need to remain the same?
- Does the purpose statement need to change in order to align with the purpose of the church?

Important reminders:

- The purpose statement should be easy to remember and tell the women what the Women's Ministry is about. In a sense, it is a promise to your women.
- Keep the purpose statement short, simple, to the point, and relational!
- Connect the purpose statement to the Bible.
- All activities and plans should reflect your purpose statement.

Step 4: Evaluate the Ministry Plan.

- Once the leadership team is in place and the purpose of the ministry is clarified, you are ready to proceed with the evaluation process. This process will help you identify the growth barriers. Often it is helpful to look back and see how God has worked in the past. This process will help you know how to move forward in a fresh new way.
- Ask these questions about each event/aspect of your ministry:

- What have we been doing over the last two years? (write everything on a white board)
- Why have we been doing it? (Answer this question for every ministry event)
- What spiritual fruit was produced during this time? (List each outcome)
- Did these events/aspects of ministry connect to our purpose and accomplish the goals of worship, grow, connect, serve and share?
- What will it take to go to the next level in terms of spiritual outcomes and more women being reached via these events and aspects of ministry? (Answer for each)
- As you evaluate you want to continue some areas of ministry. You are going to keep the areas that produce spiritual outcomes. These outcomes include:
 - **Salvation:** Women are coming to faith in Christ.
 - **Spiritual Growth:** Women are growing in their love relationship with Christ.
 - **Inspired:** Women are embracing their God-given roles in the home, church, and community.
 - **Trained and Empowered:** Women are serving in the local church and making kingdom impact at home and around the world.
- As you evaluate, identify areas that are lacking from the worship, grow, connect, serve, and share model. This is when you want to create opportunities that help your ministry to be balanced.
- Take your results to the next steps in the process.

Step 5: Continue Areas of Productive Ministry

- It is important to identify areas that have worked in the past. Continuing to offer these opportunities builds trust with your women. It lets them know that you are looking for ways to keep some things familiar while stepping out and growing in new areas. Too much change can cause women to feel disconnected and overwhelmed.
- If you cannot continue some areas of past ministry, move slowly with the change process so women can adjust and embrace the new ministry plan.

Step 6: Create Areas of Productive Ministry.

- It is essential to find creative ways to bring new ideas into your women's ministry. Do not be afraid to step out in faith. Faith is the very avenue God uses to grow ministry.
- The *Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, and Share model* is designed to help your ministry grow. During the evaluation process, you identified areas that are missing or unhealthy. Create new opportunities to address these gaps. A healthy ministry can and will grow as a deeper focus on each aspect in the Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve and Share model is implemented.

Step 7: Be Bold for the Lord.

- If you are feeling overwhelmed, take heart! God has placed you and the other leaders in your church in a place of influence for a reason. The success of the ministry is not dependent on you. God is going to work in you and through you for His glory!
- Your church may be on the brink of revival. Do not be afraid to step out in faith. God has called you to this place for “For such a time as this!”

Conclusion: Keys to Continued Healthy Growth

Growth can be challenging and exciting. Leadership direction based on strong biblical foundations is essential. As you move forward and seek to cultivate healthy growth remember these important points:

- **Involve Others:** The more people you involve, the more ownership your women will have in the process.
- **Seek Input:** Ask specific questions to help determine the needs, how to meet the needs, ideas for the future, and strategies for growth.
- **Be Creative:** Find new ways to reach women. The phrase, “We have never done it that way before” is not helpful in the process.
- **Dream Big:** Do not allow past successes or failures to influence you. It is a new day!
- **Celebrate victories:** God is going to move in a mighty way. Be ready to celebrate all the ways that God is at work

Phase 3: Expanding the Women's Ministry

A Women's Ministry that is growing in all aspects of Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, & Share, is a ministry that is ready to expand in its reach. As women's ministry leaders, we should always be looking for ways to continually encourage and challenge women to go spiritually farther with God and with each other. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing." (1 Thessalonians 5:11) Some of the ways we can develop more intentional and focused ministry can be in the following areas:

Discipleship Ministry

Mentoring Ministry

Girls Ministry

Moms Ministry

Each of the areas listed above can begin with the same basic development plan as listed for beginning a Women's Ministry in general, and by applying similar strategy as follows:

Step 1: Pray and affirm God's leadership in pursuing the ministry area that God is directing your Women's Ministry to develop. Cast a vision for this ministry and discuss this vision with your church leadership and seek approval before implementing. Before you meet and propose this idea with your church staff, you might want to already have developed the Purpose and Target part of Step 3 listed below.

Step 2: Select a leader and assemble a team to carry out this ministry plan. Most likely, there are women the Lord has brought to mind or across your path who stand out as women who God has specially equipped to lead in this ministry. This is the biblical model of how we as leaders can encourage other women to use their spiritual gifts and life experiences for building up the body of Christ through ministry!

Step 3. Develop a Ministry Purpose, strategy, and timeline. Although the ministry examples listed above target a variety of women in your church, they all require a similar basic strategy to implement the ministry plan. Once a basic plan has been developed, each ministry area would require a more detailed strategy in order to implement the most effective plan for that group of women. (See Ex: below) This plan can be assembled by asking the following questions:

- **Purpose:** How does this ministry fit into the overall ministry and church vision? (Ex: Discipleship Ministry is needed to more intentionally bring women together to create a place for them to invest, live, and grow through building relationships with one another. Through these intentional relationships, women will connect through seeking truth in God's word and spiritual depth in their everyday lives.)
- **Target group:** Who will this ministry benefit and why is it needed? (Ex: This ministry will target cross generational groups of women for the purpose of carrying out Jesus' command in Matthew 28, "... baptizing them and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded ...")

- **Strategic details:** the What, How, When, Where, Times, Facilities, etc. of what is required to effectively carry out this ministry. This is the “nuts and bolts” of how the ministry will be implemented.

(Ex: Who: 3 or 4 smaller groups of women; How: eating a meal together, fellowship over coffee; Where: in homes or church if needed; When: 1st week of the month; Duration: at least 6 months; Times: whatever works best for this group; Cost: materials?)

Step 4: Promote the start of this Ministry! Having trusted God’s leading and direction, step out and begin to communicate opportunities and enlist the women He will bring together. (All media outlets listed in (Phase 1 of Beginning WM apply)

Step 5: Strategically Launch the Ministry! It’s time to activate the ministry plan! Pray and ask God to cover this ministry for His glory and then trust that He will bring to pass the plans He has given for you and your team to implement. As you have prepared invested the time, energy, and creative thinking toward a ministry that will glorify God and draw women in deeper relationship with Him and with each other, He will be faithful to carry out the plans He has given.

Step 6: Evaluate. Know that there might be a few ‘hiccups’ in the beginning stages, and a few minor details that you will want to tweak along the way, but don’t be discouraged by not having things go perfectly as you begin. God is in the work of refining and we are all in the refining process as we step out in obedience to the work He is calling us to do among the women He has entrusted us to lead! Remember that the goal is not perfection, but progress toward growing deeper in Him and in community with one another!

Ideas for Expanding Ministry Areas

The ideas listed below are just a few ways your women's ministry might consider expanding its reach to develop deeper community among your women, as well as ways to reach women in your area. Use these ideas to spark more creative ways your women's ministry can increase your reach to women who need the message of the gospel to infiltrate their lives!

Discipleship Ministry

As a key element in the GROW component, studying God's word is a necessary foundation for ministry to women. What we desire to see happen in our women through the discipling process involves going beyond just studying God's word together. So what is discipleship? Discipleship is an intentional equipping relationship that occurs in either a one on one setting, or in small groups of 2 or 3. Kandi Gallaty defines discipleship this way in her book, "Disciple Her": *"Discipleship is intentionally equipping believers with the Word of God through accountable relationships empowered by the Holy Spirit in order to replicate faithful followers of Christ."*

There are 4 basic questions to consider as we begin to intentionally disciple other women:

1. How do we begin?
2. Whom do we help?
3. What do we share/teach?
4. What is the actual process? (logistics, frequency, length of time)

Looking at Jesus' model for the method of making disciples, we see that He was intentional in how He led them. As we apply the principle of "making disciples, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded" according to the words of Jesus in Matthew 28, we will challenge our women to build relationships that are founded on spiritual truths and to continually invest in the disciple-making process.

We can sometimes make discipleship harder than it needs to be. If you aren't sure where or how to start, we've included some helpful resources in the back of this guide.

Check out the Discipleship Resource section for more information!

Mentoring Ministry

Both mentoring and discipling are relational. But there are some differences as we look at how they vary. Titus 2 commands us as women to pass on to young women godly character traits that are honorable, and to "teach what is good ... make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching." Mentoring is walking alongside someone who is possibly in a younger season than you, offering support, advice, influence and encouragement. It is more lifestyle focused, and comes in the form of sharing experiences, wisdom, and providing a safe place for life growth. Mentoring is relationship with a purpose. It can be as organic or as organized as the mentor/mentee desire. Most younger women are hungry for a relationship with an older woman who will listen, provide direction, and just to observe how she lives her life. Shared life experiences give opportunities for women to connect in more meaningful ways. Here are some steps to consider as you begin a mentoring ministry:

1. Mentoring can be structured or organic. Pray about and decide what approach you would like to start with and adjust if necessary. Both are beneficial, depending on the level of commitment your women desire.

- **Structured:** Usually consists of a 6, 9, or 12 month commitment. Women are prayerfully matched up after completing a profile sheet.
- **Organic:** Women are encouraged to seek out their own mentors/mentees, little structure, and no start/end date. There is a relaxed freedom in this style as opposed to a more structured format.

2. Mentoring can be as informal as getting together for coffee, cooking, gardening, or involve reading a book or doing a bible study together. But it needs to be consistent and intentional.

3. Consider the various generations of women in your church and start there. Think of ways to intentionally connect these women in practical ways, both in large group and smaller group formats.

4. Step out and start! Don't be intimidated to ask someone to be a mentor for you or to offer to be a mentor for someone who is in a younger season than you. We all need women to offer life wisdom and encouragement in every season of womanhood!

Susan Hunt, author of "Spiritual Mothering" says *"If you are a Christian woman who is seeking to grow in the faith and to live obediently, then you are qualified for spiritual mothering."*

For resources and ideas, see the Mentoring section of the Resource appendix.

Girls Ministry

More and more we see that as high school girls graduate and go to college, they experience a disconnect with church. They often don't see themselves fitting in with the traditional "women's ministry" in the local church because they see that as a ministry for their moms or the 'older' women. As women's ministry leaders, we should be looking for ways to more intentionally develop relationships with the teenage girls in our church because they eventually grow into young women. Here are some quotes from Lifeway Women as to why Girls Ministry matters: "Girls ministry is an opportunity to fill girls with the truth of God's Word at a formative time in their lives." "Girls ministry is one way we fulfill our calling to make disciples."

Desired outcomes of Girls Ministry align with our Worship, Grow, Connect, Serve, Share model:

1. We must share the Gospel with our girls. They need to hear about Jesus and watch women who model what it looks like to follow Him wholeheartedly.
2. Teach girls to read and believe God's Word as THE foundation for life. Show them how to dig deep and apply truth to their everyday life.
3. Cultivate community. This is so important, especially with the cultural narrative and social media pressure that girls are being bombarded with today. Create opportunities for relationship building, connection, and fun!
4. Provide opportunities for them to serve. This generation is attracted to issues that center on social justice, and helping them develop their gifts to lead out in local and global community service is a great way to encourage them to share the gospel as they learn how to share their Jesus stories!

In addition, as we seek to train up a new generation of women to serve, we want to correctly teach them how God views women, and how He can use their giftings for His kingdom work. Include them in your events and offer a discounted rate. Let them team up with a woman to learn leadership skills. What better way than to join together in serving through ministry projects, special events, and even bible studies together!

For more information and resources, see Girls Ministry in Appendix.

Moms Ministry

When we look at the local church, we see that a ministry to moms can be instrumental in ministering to the entire family. Why is it important to minister to moms? With today's culture pulling at families, moms are more hungry than ever for God's Word and for spiritual direction. In addition, research tells us that while we are more connected than ever through social media and the internet, the reality is that women have never felt more isolated and alone, and this is especially true for moms. Moms crave community. Moms today truly desire all of these things but either don't have time or energy to create these relationships. This is where our women's ministry can step in and create opportunities for meaningful connections and life growth through starting a ministry to moms. Here are some things to consider when starting a ministry to moms:

1. Consider the needs of the moms in your church and their schedules. If most work during the day, an evening moms group is ideal. If several are stay home moms, then a daytime group could work. Ask the moms themselves what they would prefer.
2. Childcare is important. Ideally the church could provide this expense, but if not, it might be necessary to think of alternate means. Moms need to know there is quality childcare offered for their kids.
3. Decide on format. It's a good idea to start with a simple schedule that allows the moms to connect, have uninterrupted conversation, and some aspect of spiritual growth. A sample schedule might be:

Welcome/Refreshments: 30 minutes

Large Group Topic Intro: 20 minutes

Small Group Discussion: 40 minutes

This gives the moms opportunity to fellowship, hear spiritual truth, and process together for real life application. It doesn't have to be extremely structured but should be intentional and always pointing the moms to Jesus.

Ministry to moms is a simple way for women to bring friends who may be unchurched or non-believers. Providing spaces for moms to connect provides a great entry point for a family to become involved in the local church, because it provides an opportunity to meet both practical and spiritual needs. Most moms everywhere are looking for community at an exhausting and overwhelming season of life. A hot cup of coffee, some conversation, and being with other moms who can offer encouragement and support is all it takes to start a lifechanging ministry to moms!

More ideas for ministry to moms can be found in the Moms Ministry section of the Resource Appendix.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As Women's Ministry leaders, we must realize that we've been entrusted with providing leadership to the women of the church. However, before we can effectively lead others, we have to lead ourselves and the leadership team God has given us to manage. Leadership Development matters because if we are to take seriously Jesus' reference to the Great Commandment in Mark 12 - which is to "love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, and with all of your strength", then leading with everything we have is not an option. If we've been placed in a position of ministry leadership, we must ask ourselves, "am I loving God with everything I have and with all that He's placed inside of me for His glory?"

Leadership is really stewardship of resources and people. Jenni Catron says, "The stewardship of people is the highest calling of the leader. Our primary responsibility is developing the best in others and calling that out for the good of both them and the organizations they serve." If we are in a position where we have influence over other people for direction and decisions, then we are in a position of stewarding what we've been entrusted with and the Bible is very clear on that. Three questions that are often neglected (because we get sidetracked by the planning and the doing of the ministry itself), that we should continually be asking ourselves are:

1. How am I leading myself?
2. How am I leading the ministry team?
3. How am I leading future leaders? Am I investing and cultivating women who will come behind me to lead?

Some ideas to consider as you begin to intentionally grow in Leadership Development are listed below:

- Encourage your team and your women to take Spiritual Gifts and Personality Assessments. Does your leadership team know their spiritual gifts? Do you know your spiritual gift? And do the women who are in your church know their spiritual gifts and where they might be able to plug in and serve within the context of women's ministry? How can you be intentional in finding ways to connect women and grow the ministry?(4 Dimensions Assessment, P.L.A.C.E.; SHAPE, 5 Voices, etc.)
- Attend a state or national leadership training conference - both individually and as a team.
- Make a plan for your own personal leadership development. What are your leadership goals?
- Assess where you are now and where you need to grow as a leader. Be honest about your weaknesses as well as your strengths. Ask others for input as you assess yourself - people who you trust to give you honest feedback.
- List specific and immediate goals for your own leadership and for your team's leadership.
- List future goals - map out a strategy and timeline to reach those goals and then begin to intentionally work toward them.
- Opportunities for Leadership Development: Is there a leadership pipeline and are your women aware of it?

As women who serve in the church, we often don't see ourselves as leaders. The truth is, God has placed within us abilities that He desires to use for His kingdom purposes. In Matthew 25, when the master gave the 3 men the talents, according to their ability. 2 of the men took theirs and earned more but one man buried his. He neglected to steward well what he had been given. This passage challenges us as women who are in a position of leadership. We also see women throughout scripture who take what the Lord has given them and use it well. They were faithful and obedient to God and He used them in their time for His purposes.

APPENDIX A: Women's Ministry Resource List

Ideas and Resources for Girls Ministry:

Lifeway Girls: girlsministry.lifeway.com
Girlsminister.com - Amy jo Girardier
"Show Her the Way", by Mary Margaret West

Ideas and Resources for Moms Ministry

Lifeway Women
Group Publishing "Where Moms Connect"
MomHeart Ministries/Sally Clarkson: <https://wholeheart.org/mom-heart-ministry>
Momstrong International: Momstronginternational.com
Thrive Moms Ministry: Thrivemoms.com

Ideas and Resources for Mentoring Ministry

Lifeway Women: womensministry.lifeway.com
"Flourish: a Mentoring Journey", by Passion City Church, lifeway.com
"Organic Mentoring", by Sue Edwards and Barbara Neumann
"Spiritual Mothering: the Titus 2 Model", by Susan Hunt; titus2mentoringwomen.com
Woman to Woman Mentoring: womantowomanmentoring.com
"Apples of Gold", by Betty Huizenga. Applesofgold.org
Titus 2 Mentoring Ministry

Ideas and Resources for Discipleship Ministry

Lifeway Women: womensministry.lifeway.com
"Disciple Her", by Kandi Gallaty;
article, "What is Discipleship?" <https://blog.lifeway.com/womenallaccess/2017/02/07/what-is-discipleship/?emid=women-eblast-blogposts-discipleship-20170406&ecid=88614222&bid=773548937>
"The Gentle Art of Discipling Women", book by Dana Yeakley
IF Gathering Discipleship Collective
Smallgroup.com

Ideas and Resources for Leadership Development

Lifeway Women Leadership blog: womensministry.lifeway.com
Lifeway Women Events: <https://www.lifeway.com/en/events/women>
Women's Leadership Forum
You Lead events
"Ministry to Women", by Kelly King, Lifeway Women Specialist
"Women Leading Women", by Jaye Martin & Terri Stovall
"Word-Filled Women's Ministry", by Gloria Furman & Kathleen Nielson
"The 4 Dimensions of Extraordinary Leadership", by Jenni Catron
"Lead Like Jesus Revisited", Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, Phyllis Hendry
"The Team That Jesus Built", by Janet Thompson

Recommended Podcasts

Inspire on the Go - a Women's Ministry podcast -Arkansas Baptists

MARKED – Lifeway Women

At The Table – SBC Women

By Faith with Christine Hoover

The Wonder Podcast – Prestonwood Women

Appendix B: Sample Conference/Retreat Budget

Income for an event can come from ticket sales, donated or raised funds, and your women's ministry budget. Be sure and take into account the program leaders and volunteers who will not be asked to pay to attend the event.

When planning a Conference or Retreat, take into consideration the following expense categories:

- Arrangements:
 - Facility Fees
 - Food

- Program:
 - Honorarium (worship leaders)
 - Honorarium (speaker)
 - Transportation and lodging for guest leaders

- Publicity:
 - Newspaper advertisement
 - Radio advertisement
 - Postcard and postage
 - Printed materials (brochures, posters, and programs)
 - Printing Cost for Handouts

- Decorations:
 - Entrance to the building
 - Stage/Sanctuary
 - Meal/Fellowship area
 - Displays/Bulletin Board

- Childcare:
 - Fees for the workers
 - Food for the kids and workers

- Gifts:
 - Door prizes
 - Gift basket for the platform speaker and worship leader
 - Take home gift for the participants (optional)
 - Gift bags for participants that can include tissues, lotion, pen, handouts, gum, novelty items

WORSHIP

Draws our hearts near to God

From the beginning of our day till the end, we are called to worship. The Bible says, “Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.” (Psalm 99:5, New International Version) The holiness of God should permeate the way we live as well as the way we lead. To be holy means to be set apart and spiritually pure. When we focus on God, meaning that we wake up each day and tune our hearts and minds to Him and His ways, we encounter His holiness. This encounter helps us see God in His greatness and goodness. It also helps us see ourselves in our sinfulness and neediness.

Worship paves the way for our focus, values, perspectives, priorities, and outlooks to change. This change helps us value and embrace the eternal things of God over the temporary things of man. An example of worship changing the direction of an individual’s life took place in Isaiah 6. Isaiah was in the presence of God and immediately knew his sinfulness. He said, “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty,” (Isaiah 6:5). God cleansed Isaiah of his sin, and Isaiah’s response was profound. He said, “Here am I, send me,” (Isaiah 6:8).

For just a moment, imagine the women in your church saying, “Here am I, send me!” Of course, in today’s world it would sound a little different. It might sound like this: “I am willing to help!” “I want to share my faith!” “I want to show others the love of Jesus!” “I want to bake a cake or decorate a table!” What if responses like these became the norm at your church?

All women’s ministry leaders want to lead ministries full of women producing spiritual fruit. We long to see women who recognize their need for God and as a result display a desperate dependence upon Him.

How can it happen? Isn’t that the million-dollar question? Thankfully, God’s Word provides everything we need for life and godliness. God’s Word teaches about the importance of slowing down, taking a deep breath, and focusing on God. In one word, God’s Word teaches us to worship. This focus allows our hearts and minds to be tuned to God and His will for our lives. It is easy for women’s ministries to become more about activity than worship. This is a dangerous trap. If leaders are not careful, we can give women more things to do instead of providing an avenue for women to connect with God. When women connect with God, they hear from Him and know the things that they are called to do.

Worship should be at the foundation of your women’s ministry. When we worship, we focus on God. When we focus on God, we hear from Him. When we hear from Him, we have the chance to live in obedience. When we live in obedience, we demonstrate a thriving life in Christ that is full of meaning and purpose.

In order for worship to occur in and through your women's ministry, you need to make sure that the atmosphere of your ministry and events have the following three attributes:

- **Genuine:** Women need to experience the genuine love of Jesus as well as the genuine love of others. This love should be heartfelt and real.
- **Relational:** Women need to know there is a place for them to belong. They need to know God has a plan for their lives and you want to help them connect with God in a meaningful way.
- **Consistent:** Women need to know they can trust Jesus as well as count on you.

Here are a few practical ways to implement worship in your women's ministry:

- Provide meaningful times of praise and prayer during women's ministry event.
- Encourage women to incorporate praise and prayer in to their daily routine.
- Host a night of worship. Enlist a praise team and a prayer team. Let the women know you want them to slow down, take a deep breath, and worship at the feet of Jesus.
- Make prayer a meaningful part of your ministry. Provide an avenue for women to share prayer requests and praises with one another.

Maybe you have never considered worship to be a vital part of women's ministry. It is easy to think of worship in the context of music alone. Worship really is a lifestyle. It is understanding that we need our hearts and minds to be tuned to God. When this occurs, our lives as well as our ministries are positioned to honor God in every way.

GROW

Draws our minds to the Word

Often I have wondered about the difference the Bible can make in daily living. I mean... can we really tell the difference between a woman who is reading and applying the Bible to life and a woman who is not? I believe that the answer to this question is a profound, "yes!" Psalm 119 has a lot to say about the importance of the Bible. From this Psalm, we learn that reading and applying God's Word leads to a:

- Shame free life (v. 6)
- Pure life (v. 9)
- Sin free life (v. 11)
- Comfort during suffering (v. 50)
- Knowledge and good judgment (v. 66)

I know you long for the women in your church to experience the benefits of applying the Bible to daily living. Imagine your women living a shame free life. Think about your women knowing the right decisions to make. Certainly, God's Word can and will change the direction of anyone's life. The impact of this change is radical... families, churches, communities, the nation, and the world are impacted by women who have been challenged and changed by the Word of God.

The Bible is God's living, breathing, and active Word. The women in your church need to connect with God's Word on a daily basis. Spiritual growth in a Christian's life cannot occur without a consistent intake of the Bible. Connecting women to God's Word should be a top priority for women's ministry leaders. As a result, it is important to develop and implement a strategic plan. Here are a few key strategies:

- **Offer studies that address varying needs in a woman's life.** Often women find themselves in different seasons of life. Maybe it is a "mom" season, a "single" season, or a "widow" season. Be strategic when you offer studies. Do your best to meet women right in the middle of their daily living. You can use a survey in order to find out what "seasons" are represented in your church.
- **Offer studies on all spiritual levels... milk to meat.** As much as possible, offer studies that meet women at their current spiritual level and then helps them to grow in their faith walk. For the new believer, they need to be equipped in the basic doctrines of the faith. For the mature believer, they need to be challenged to dig deeper in the Bible and know that God always offers opportunities for them to grow.
- **Vary the studies and authors to meet the changing needs of women.** Avoid offering the same type of study, written by the same author, year after year. Women benefit from different approaches to studying the Bible. This variety will help the women to grow as they are challenged by different teachers with different perspectives. (Be sure and check the theological accuracy of the studies.)
- **Work within the overall Bible study strategy of your church.** Ask your pastor or minister of education about their plan for the upcoming semester. Work together on

bible study strategies. There will be times when you can offer a study that compliments a sermon series or a discipleship focus.

- **Offer studies of varying lengths and at different times.** Women are busy and they like to have options. Some women like to attend a four to six-week study. Other women like to attend an eight to twelve-week study. Some women can meet in the day while others have to meet at night. Use a survey and ask the women to share the best time to meet as well as the desired length of the study.
- **Offer quality childcare.** Women need to feel excited about the childcare that is offered during bible study. If possible, find a way to teach the children during this time. What a win/win for everyone!
- **Enlist gifted teachers or facilitators:** God has given different types of gifts to different types of people. One gift is the gift of teaching. Identify the teachers in your church. These are the people who love God's Word and can accurately communicate it to others. A facilitator does not have to have the gift of teaching. This person needs to be organized, friendly, and an effective communicator. Some studies need a teacher while other studies need a facilitator. It is important to know the difference so you can enlist the right type of leader. This positions the group to be successful.
- **Promote well:** In order for women to come to Bible study, they need to know what studies are being offered. Use all modes of communication and invite all the women in your church and community.
- **Ask for feedback:** Learn from your mistakes and be willing to try new things. Ask the women in the group what worked and what did not work. Do not be afraid of messing up or making a mistake. Embrace it as part of the process.

"All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

1 Timothy 3:16, New International Version

Connect

Draws us near to each other in community

To connect means to join together. Women need to connect or join together with other women in meaningful ways. God created women to be relational. We need to experience the love and support of others. We also need to be willing to extend that same type of love and support to others.

As a women's ministry leader, it is important for you to know the correct role that women should play in each other's lives. Women can attempt to fill their lives with the love of others and in the process miss the most important relationship of all, a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. When this occurs, women try to use a human relationship to meet a need in life that was designed by God and for God. At the heart of biblical connection is the understanding that God meets the deepest relational need in our lives. When women attempt to meet this need outside of Jesus, the attempt falls short every single time.

What does biblical connection look like in our lives? The early church in the book of Acts provides a great example. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common." (Acts 2:42-44, New International Version)

Within the local church, women need to find a place where they belong. They need to have a chance to have things in common with other women. This can be hard. Women are very different. However, when we focus on Jesus and our relationship with Jesus, we find common ground. In fact, we find ground that weathers the storms of life and celebrates the good times, too. The outcome of this process... women are loved, challenged, accepted, valued, and supported.

Women need to connect with women in their age group as well as women in differing age groups. As a leader, it is important for you to be on the lookout for cliques and power groups within the women's ministry. It is sad to admit that this happens in churches. If we are honest, we need to admit that sometimes we can be part of the clique or power group.

The best way to avoid this in your women's ministry is to offer consistent opportunities for new women to come to your church, connect with others, and take part in ministry. As the leader, you set the tone for the acceptance of others. Enlist a task force of leaders to spot new people or hurting people and help them connect to a group in a meaningful way.

There are at least three types of settings where women need to have a chance to connect with other women in your church:

- **Large Group Setting:** Your church should offer opportunities for all the women in your church to gather for a night of fellowship. These settings offer a great opportunity for women in the community to come and be encouraged. Theme nights, dessert fellowships, and book clubs offer times for fun fellowship where women can get to know one another in a casual setting. Retreats, conferences, and banquets offer meaningful times where women can connect in order to develop relationships, be encouraged, and be equipped with the Bible.
- **Life-Stage Setting:** Age graded or life-stage graded fellowships provide a time for deeper, more meaningful relationships to develop. Spiritual conversations can center on relevant issues like marriage, parenting, empty nest, singles, working-moms, etc. Plan events for the different age groups in your church. A day at the park for young moms or a lunch outing for the senior adult women. Women will enjoy connecting with other women in their stage of life. Remember to promote the event and invite everyone in that stage of life to attend.
- **One-on-One Setting:** Often times the most meaningful connections in a women's ministry occur in one-on-one relationships. These relationships can involve an older woman and a younger woman. Prayer support, accountability, and mentoring can occur through these meaningful connections.

The women in your church and community will benefit from finding a place to belong where they are wanted, welcomed, and loved. Cultivating this type of church atmosphere requires prayer and planning. Taking small steps to help the women in your church connect with one another is crucial. When you do, your church will grow and the women in your church will be enriched and changed.

Serve

Draws us together in service and community ministry

One of the most exciting things you can do as a women's ministry leader is help the women in your church get outside the walls of the church. Taking the love of Jesus to the streets can be gritty and life-changing. It can change the women in your church, because they see the needs of others and experience God using them to meet the needs. It can change the life of the person being served, because they experience the love of Jesus, maybe for the first time.

Sometimes it is hard to know how to reach the community with the love of Jesus. Let's be honest. The needs are overwhelming. A discovery process can be very helpful. An important first step is to assess the needs around you. Ask community leaders for input. Community leaders will know the greatest needs as well as the needs that are not being addressed. This important first step will help your service project to be relevant and impactful.

Ask the women in your church for ideas, too. Find out if there are projects that are near and dear to their hearts. If you can find a project that the women in your church are passionate about, it will make the process smoother, because your women will eagerly get involved. For example, if you have a school teacher in your church, and she knows about a feeding program for children, she can speak to the validity and impact of the program. This approach to discovering needs can position the project to be highly successful.

Practical "Serve" Strategies: Once you select the project, you are ready to go!

- **Recruit key leaders:** You cannot do this project on your own. Ask God to raise up a service project leader who is passionate about demonstrating the love of Jesus to people in the community. You will also need to recruit people in your church who are influential. These influential leaders are loved, respected, and trusted. Often times, key leaders will help you gain the involvement of the masses.
- **Cast a vision by sharing the need with the women in your church:** Use every opportunity to promote the service project. Have someone from the community share the need as well as the potential impact the service project will make in the lives of others.
- **Provide training if needed:** Sometimes women shy away from service projects because they do not feel equipped. You can reduce stress or anxiety by offering a time where questions are answered, basic information is provided, and women are trained.
- **Complete the service project together:** Even though you may not be leading the project, it is important for you to be involved. If possible, find a way for the women to complete the project with other women. This will help the connection bonds between the women in your church develop and grow.
- **Celebrate the victory:** Share the victories and success stories with all the members of your church. This will encourage more women to take part in the next service project.

- **Set another service project date and allow the momentum to grow:** Let the women in your church know that service is biblical and that it will be an ongoing part of the women's ministry.

Service projects should be done in love and with a focus on Jesus. This type of service opens the door for the gospel to be shared. Be sure and encourage your ladies to embrace a life of service. Getting outside the walls of your church can be scary and exciting. Do not allow fear or the attitude of, "we have never done it before," to stand in the way of demonstrating the love of Jesus. Always remember... Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. He served by giving up His life. (Matthew 20:28, New International Version) We need to follow His perfect example.

Share

Draws others in our world to Jesus

Believers in Jesus Christ have the best news in the world! We have the chance to share about Jesus. We get to tell others how Jesus came to this earth, lived a perfect life, died in our place, and offers the only way to salvation. This news is so good that it changes the direction of our lives and gives us an eternal home in heaven with God. Without a doubt, we need to be ready and willing to tell others about Jesus!

Sharing, also known as evangelism, can be intimidating. Often women feel like they have to know a lot of bible verses or have all the answers to questions that might be asked. Sometimes women think they will “mess up” by sharing the wrong information. For these reasons and others, many women shy away from initiating spiritual conversations.

I do not know about you, but I am tired of Satan stealing the joy that comes from telling others about Jesus. It is my prayer that women’s ministry leaders across Arkansas will take a stand against Satan and his schemes. We can stand together by equipping women with the necessary tools to share Jesus with the people they meet.

One of the best strategies for equipping women in the area of sharing is through relational evangelism. Relational evangelism occurs when we are intentional with the relationships in our lives. We take part in relational evangelism when we discover the people in our lives who do not know Jesus. Then we find ways to tell them about Him.

Think about the people in your life. These people are from your neighborhood, work, school, or community. Do they know Jesus? If not, God may have placed them in your life so that you can tell them about Jesus. If we are not careful, we easily miss these opportunities to share Jesus.

Women need to share Jesus at home and around the world. We are called to “go” and “take” the good news. This call may lead us to the other side of town or it may lead us to the other side of the world. The important point is this... we need to be ready and willing! We need to be prepared “to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15, New International Version) Being prepared is not hard; however, it does require investment in the process.

Practical “Share” strategies at home:

- Encourage women to know their story, own their story, and share their story:
 - **Women should be able to tell about their life before they met Christ.** This explanation can involve how they searched for meaning in the things of this world or how they knew they needed Jesus because of the sin in their lives.
 - **Women should be able to tell how they met Christ.** This explanation should involve key concepts of sin, separation from God, Jesus’ death on the cross,

Jesus paying our sin debt, Jesus rising from the grave, and Jesus' offering to save us from our sins.

- **Women should be able to tell about their life since they met Christ.** This explanation should focus on how their relationship with Jesus has changed them. For example, "Jesus set me free from anxiety or addiction and He has filled my life with peace and a new sense of purpose."
- Challenge women to identify one or two key relationships that are in their lives for the purpose of sharing.
- As a women's ministry, pray for the women who are sharing their faith as well as the women who are hearing the good news of Jesus.

Practical "Share" strategies for around the world:

- Promote mission opportunities by spotlighting an upcoming trip or a specific people group.
- Pray for the people group that God has called your women to reach with the good news of Jesus.
- Invite women to go on a mission trip and see first-hand the incredible opportunity to share their faith.
- Encourage the women to give sacrificially to mission work through the Cooperative Program.

The bottom line is this... believers in Jesus need to share their faith. We have hope because we have Jesus. Other women need hope, too. Often, God will use us to be the connector between a woman's need for hope and the only true source of hope, Jesus!

For help in equipping and engaging women in your church and community, contact Andrea Lennon at alennon@absc.org.